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# The American RECORD GUIDE

FOR THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



MAY, 1950 - VOL. XVI, No. 5  
edited by PETER HUGH REED  
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for Violin Unaccompanied. (With Beethoven: Sonata No. 8 in G Major, Op. 30, No. 3.) Tossy Spivakovsky (Violin). ML 2089

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# The American RECORD GUIDE



MAY, 1950

VOL. XVI, No. 9

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



An Open Letter To Our British Friends .....	281
Records and the Bach Bi-Centennial — Philip L. Miller .....	284
Famous Pianists of Yesterday — Harold C. Schonberg .....	289
Book Reviews .....	293
LP Re-Issues .....	294
Record Notes and Reviews .....	295

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May, 1950

## An Open Letter To Our British Friends

THE FOLLOWING LETTER is one of a number received this past month by your editor. It is chosen because its author writes dispassionately and objectively in stating a case which others seem unable to talk about calmly.

"The spirit of fair play that continually pervades your editorials has encouraged me to write to you about Compton Mackenzie's editorial in the April issue of 'The Gramophone.'

"Many of us have followed the recent trend of record criticism in England and watched it assume an extremely chauvanistic attitude. Inevitably, an American recording gets a less warm reception than one of comparable quality manufactured in England.

"With a realization of this situation, it seems regrettable to me that Mr. Mackenzie should have fallen completely overboard and devised such a condemning editorial on the subject of American long-playing records. This piece, based on letters which contain some sound complaints and much unbelievable nonsense, appears to be more than a trifle irresponsible.

"It would give great satisfaction to me and, I am certain, many of your other readers, if you would refute some of the ridiculous statements made about American microgroove recording. No one, in my estimation, is better qualified to meet this challenge. Sincerely yours, C. A. Green, Dallas, Texas."

We have not overlooked during the past year the tendency of most English record reviewers to embrace their domestic products and to oppose almost any type of American-made disc. However, in fairness to the editor and staff of "The Gramophone," it must be noted that their "wait and see" attitude is scarcely different

from the feelings of a majority of stunned record buyers that were to be found in this country last year. Of course, part of the confusion among American record buyers was created by not one, but two new speeds. This situation caused many music listeners to abandon record buying temporarily. Suspicious of the merits of the long-playing record, they were reluctant to make what appeared to be radical changes.

The preference of British critics for their own record releases is perhaps closer to conservatism than to the chauvinism our correspondent implies. It may, indeed, be that most British reproducing equipment is incapable of handling successfully any record that has not been made with H.M.V., Columbia, or Decca recording characteristics. Certainly the high bass turnover in American recording cannot be matched by the majority of machines in use in postwar England. This situation causes distortion in the playback of our recordings; for without proper balance of the bass, the upper characteristics are often shrill and harsh.

Inasmuch as English engineers were the first to develop and promote high frequency reproduction on 78 rpm discs (viz. article in our January, 1950 issue, "London Gramophone Begins a New Era"), they have a justifiable pride in their 78 recordings. Naturally they are reluctant to replace this perfected record with one of uncertain characteristics.

### Record Compensation Essential

There are, however, a small minority of British record buyers who can correctly compensate American recordings and who are eagerly importing our products. Many of this group have discovered the advantages of long-playing discs and have converted their equipment to play them. It cannot be said that those who have imported the LP attachment players marketed in this country have obtained completely satisfactory equipment. Yet, we can quote several readers in far away Australia and New Zealand who have bought one of these players and who appear to have found the utmost satisfaction in hearing uninterrupted music.

Our admiration for English recordings has never flagged. Most of their discs are processed better than American products. They are not today, however, always superior in reproduction. After the last record ban, the American companies turned

to tape for the original recording and achieved better manufacturing results. The change to unbreakable, plastic records permitted a quality of sound not previously obtainable from the best shellac. (One company official we know says that the virtual English monopoly on shellac forced this move on American manufacturers; the price of shellac had soared so high after the war that our record companies were forced to find a substitute to keep down the cost of domestic records.)

### The 45 rpm Disc

While English 78 rpm shellac discs have consistently since the war challenged similar American products, the plastic record in this country has been utilized to introduce another new system and speed which in many cases proves to be one of the finest reproducing mediums for the phonograph. We refer to the 45 rpm disc, originally introduced by RCA Victor, which has captured the admiration of the American record buying public in the popular and light classics field. Correctly reproduced, this record at its best is a keen competitor to any 78 rpm being made anywhere. Its only drawback in the serious music field is that it provides no more music to a side than has been had on 78 records. The LP record in this latter musical category is unexcelled, and there is no question that it has won the favor of the greater group of classical record buyers in America.

Some facts regarding the LP record might be of interest to our foreign as well as our domestic readers. One concern, which operates on a subscription basis, found this past year that its members ordered 90 per cent LPs to 10 per cent 78s. Countless smaller companies have entered the record field in the past two years issuing LPs only.

Today, in the American record world, the demise of the 78 rpm disc is regarded as not too far distant. Because of the success of the 45 rpm in one field, and the 33 rpm in another, it is predicted that in a few short years only these records will be sold in this country.

In a speech, made at a recent press luncheon, Paul A. Barkmeier, Vice President and General Manager of RCA Victor's Record Department, stated that in his estimation "the 78 rpm record would not survive longer than five years in this country." He also pointed out that "at the present time all major recording com-



panies except two, and a large number of smaller manufacturers are now making the 45 rpm record . . ." Underscoring the fact that RCA Victor is now in the LP as well as 45 rpm business, he declared that both speeds "have revitalized a record industry which was badly in need of new developments; no fundamental changes for improvement in records had been made for over a generation. Both the 45 rpm and the long-play records have reawakened the interest of the public in recorded music."

### A Revolutionizing Force

There is a growing realization in the trade and among educators that the LP disc is revolutionizing interest in classical music in this country. Hearing music without excessive interruptions has created an interest in many works that previously had small sales on 78 rpm discs.

In view of these irrefutable facts, it is understandable that many would be concerned about the Editorial in the April issue of "The Gramophone," a magazine which has served record buyers throughout the world so faithfully for over a quarter of a century.

In printing the two letters from correspondents in Canada and in New York, Compton Mackenzie, one of our favorite editors, has stirred quite a number of American readers of "The Gramophone." Besides the correspondents who have written of their displeasure, other people have spoken to us in person and on the phone, strongly voicing their disapproval of Mackenzie's editorial. Since the facts stated in both of the letters printed in that editorial are often inaccurate and remiss, Mackenzie has, to say the least, thrown a challenge at the collective feet of the American music listener and of the trade.

It is obvious that Mr. Ford of Vancouver is reluctant to convert to LP or 45. He undoubtedly prefers a course of "excessive caution" in matters pertaining to modern alterations of long established customs in the use of equipment. One feels that he considers a change almost a personal affront to his long established habits. The challenge of the machine age is usually reflected in the advancement and betterment of most products. This situation often demands radical change and expense which many persons are loathe to make. The above is not a personal criticism of Mr. Ford, whose interest is clearly aroused. We feel that he is simply unfamiliar with

the true facts and has probably been duped by poor demonstrations of LP discs.

Let us take up the points in Mr. Ford's letter. His various peeves are numbered, so we will number in similar manner our replies.

1. Mr. Ford writes of the addition of another unit to his phonograph (an LP record player) and that unit's reproductive quality. He misquotes this magazine in regard to our recommendations. We did not recommend a separate player, and never have shown partiality for such a unit. We recommend (viz. article by Robert S. Lanier in our February, 1950 issue) conversion by the replacement of any old motor and changer with a new manual unit permitting two or three-way speeds as preferred by the individual. It is our belief that the changer will in time be done away with by most music listeners.

2. Mr. Ford speaks of the manufacturing "imperfections" of the LP disc. If these discs are correctly compensated in the treble and bass, it has been our experience that 90 per cent of them reproduce satisfactorily. Perfection in manufacture will come. This is a new development and reputable engineers in the field are constantly working to achieve perfection. The crackling in LP records can be controlled. There is a radium brush and several liquids which have proved efficient. However, in recent months hardly one out of ten LP discs we have heard, have any evidence of crackling. Dust is a vital factor in this trouble, and careful cleaning of the record helps.

3. Loss in fidelity is Mr. Ford's next gripe. The fidelity is superior to most 78 rpms if heard on good equipment with proper compensations of top and bottom. In cases where LPs have been dubbed from original 78s, the 33 is often better. This is because the LP is taken from the original masters. It must be noted that much fidelity has been lost in the processing of the majority of 78s. Almost any shellac record, no matter how quiet the surface, has some loss of original highs from the masters.

4. "Limited selection." While there is some truth in Mr. Ford's observation, it is reasonable to believe that the majority is well served. As a matter of fact, where two selections are mated on a single disc, the majority of LPs to date are less offending in this respect than the majority

(Continued on page 290)



The School of St. Thomas Church at Leipzig where Bach taught.

## RECORDS AND THE BACH BI-CENTENNIAL

By PHILIP L. MILLER

One of the great privileges of living in our mechanical generation is that we can explore and study all of the aspects of the vast repertory of the musical past. We are able, as no generation ever was able before, to know the works of that fellow of infinite variety, Johann Sebastian Bach. On July 28th, this year, Bach will have been dead just two hundred years; therefore the sponsors of recording, from not altogether pious motives, are going to give us plenty of new performances to remember him by. Few composers could survive so much attention.

The not altogether accurate legend has it that with his death Bach passed into shrouded oblivion. His gifted sons, to whom he gave the most solid foundations, were going their own ways musically. They struck out in new directions, preparing the way for such geniuses as Haydn and Mozart, and incidentally producing some not inconsiderable music of their own. To them their father's ways were the ways of a past age, his music the admirable background against which they could express themselves. And of course they were right. Johann Sebastian was not a revolutionary, not an original genius comparable to Beethoven. His music, rather, was the summing up of all that had developed in the centuries before him. What the world needed now was a

new kind of expression, and this his sons were striving to provide.

Even so, it is not quite true to say that Bach was ever totally forgotten. Although he had not been acclaimed as Handel or Vivaldi were, his good deeds had a way of shining in a naughty world, and his candle was not completely extinguished. Mozart, we remember, had discovered him, and his own music showed the effects of the discovery; Beethoven was not unaware of him. With the perspective of time Mendelssohn was able to show him to the world, and his historic production of the "Saint Matthew Passion," some 75 years after the composer's death, is accepted by historians as the beginning of the "Bach revival." The forces that were then set in motion are not yet spent; indeed they have found new impetus in a mechanical device known as the phonograph and in a science called recording.

We who belong to the older generation of record collectors have been happily able to observe the growth of public acceptance and enthusiasm for this music. We can look back to 1915, when Victor issued a condensed version, one side to a movement, of the "Concerto for two violins," by Fritz Kreisler and Efrem Zimbalist. A good start, for in some ways that first acoustic version, with its reticent string quartet accompaniment, will

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stand up against any of its later rivals. Of course this was only a flash in the pan.

The next major contributions to the repertoire came with electrical recording, some ten years later. Need we blush to acknowledge that they came in the form of lush orchestral transcriptions, made and performed by Leopold Stokowski with the Philadelphia Orchestra? If we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit that the first recordings of this type, so wonderful at the time for their orchestral reproduction, were the door by which many came to Bach.

While we are being honest, let us remember that the Stokowski transcriptions played their part in the concert hall too. Conductors in those days were not so prone to reducing the size of their ensemble for the Suites or Brandenburg Concertos, and for music lovers who could not make the pilgrimage to Bethlehem or to some other festival, performances of the choral works (except for organ-accompanied church services built around the "Saint Matthew Passion") were rare indeed and the cantatas practically unknown.

### Some Pioneer Performers

It was the Friends of Music under Bodanzky that gave many of us our first impressions of the "Saint John Passion" and the "Christmas Oratorio"; and the establishment of the Oratorio Society's annual B minor Mass dates no further back than the late 1920s. Harold Samuel brought us the complete keyboard works, played, to be sure, on a modern piano, but with an art and an absorption that transcended the medium. Unfortunately he did not live quite long enough to ride the tide of the interest he created, and his few fine records show signs of becoming rarities. For the organ works similar pioneering in public concerts was done by Lynwood Farnam, who unhappily left us no recordings at all.

But on the whole the stars were propitious. Concert hall performances and recordings played into one another's hands, and such things as the first Victor "B minor Mass" (with its magnificent soloists) could remain nearly two decades in the catalog before being replaced. By now, all the other great masterpieces have been done, for better or for worse, except the "Saint John Passion" (rumored

on the way under the guidance of Robert Shaw) and the "Christmas Oratorio."

Again it seems that the stars are with us, for the Bach bicentennial is creating in the master's works a vast amount of interest. And so the time has come to talk of two important things: the repertoire already given us this year and that which we are about to receive. For both we are duly thankful. Already the Bach year has been the occasion for two complete recordings of the "Well tempered clavier" (Landowska's is under way, and Nef's is available in its entirety on eight twelve-inch LP discs), the two previously unreleased Cello Suites played by the incomparable Pablo Casals, the motet "Jesu meine Freude," and some new versions of the Suites and Brandenburg Concertos. (These have already been noted in these pages.) The flood continues with the first complete "Saint Matthew Passion" sung in the original German; a new orchestral presentation of Bach's crowning achievement, "Die Kunst der Fuge"; the complete Brandenburgs once again, this time conducted by Reiner; the motet, "Singet dem Herrn"; and the opening choruses of two cantatas newly transcribed from the German recordings to LP, cantatas 11 and 67 in English translation, featuring Kathleen Ferrier, by way of London; two LP discs of organ music by E. Power Biggs; and the motets, "Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden" and "Komm, Jesu, komm" and three chorales by the Schola Cantorum under Hugh Ross. Might we dare to hope for a new "Musikalisches Opfer," for more organ recordings and for the "Christmas Oratorio"?

### The Art of the Fugue

"The Art of Fugue" is an amazing and unparalleled work, one which has had the world guessing ever since it first became known. Because it was never finished and never explained by the master himself, no one can be sure whether it was intended for performance, what medium Bach had in mind for it, or whether, (as some authorities have held) he simply meant it to demonstrate what could be done with the fugal form. Demonstrate this he certainly did, beginning with four simple fugues and progressing through all manner of elaborations, inversions, diminutions, augmentations, all utilizing one basic theme, and four breathtaking can-

ons, derived from the same material, to the final unfinished masterpiece which would have been a triple or quadruple fugue. If this was intended as purely didactic music, then surely it proves that such mastery is incapable of producing dullness.

### A Vital Performance

The new recording of "The Art of Fugue" was made in Switzerland by the Radio Orchestra of Beromünster under the direction of Hermann Scherchen (London LLP-A 2, three LP discs, \$17.85). The orchestration is that of Roger Vuataz, based on the edition of W. Graeser in the "Neue Bachgesellschaft." Divided into five groups, with the final unfinished fugue constituting a sixth, the arrangement is cunningly contrived to emphasize the cumulative effect of the whole. Whatever Bach intended, this work as we have it is absolute music in the highest sense; it must and does carry its effect by the perfection of its form and its melodic content. Instrumental sound for its own sake has no place in the scheme. But on the other hand, the sequence of fugues is long and taxing, and if we care to listen through — which we must to get the grand effect of its structure — there must be variety of color as well as perfect clarity of line and transparency of texture. It is for this reason that the new set electrifies and carries the listener far beyond the realm of the old Columbia album that featured the Roth Quartet playing the Harris and Norton arrangement. I cannot deny the balance and cleanness of the latter transcription (though the chamber music approach belongs to a later day than Bach's) but long before the end the string tone begins to pall, and the constant growth of the work as a whole is apt to be missed by the wearying listener. And, at that, the canons are not included. I have had the Columbia set in my house ever since it was new, and I cannot remember when I last listened through it. The Scherchen performance is an exciting experience, and I look forward to many repetitions. It may be that his reading is not altogether free of the romantic influence, that some of his ritards are questionable; but the total effect is unmistakably Bach. The once forbidding music has at least come close to us; it is no longer necessary for one to be a musician to wonder at it and "feel" it.

Who knows but that these greatest and most moving of fugues may yet become our musical bible and our daily bread?

Taken as a whole the recording is as admirable as the performance; but like the work itself, the recording grows as it goes. The first side, played entirely by strings, struck me as a trifle dead in sound; but this impression was easily forgotten when the wood winds took over on side 2. The canons, to be sure, seemed somewhat out of the picture — a little too close and almost frighteningly loud. There was some loss of clarity on side 5, and there were times throughout the set when I wanted a stronger alto voice.

One of the memorable moments comes at the beginning of the final section of the last fugue, where Bach has woven into his music the four letters of his own name. Since the section was destined never to be completed, it takes on for the listener all sorts of extra-musical associations and meanings. How right, then, that it should be played in a hushed tone of mysticism and mystery. The arranger has carried on beyond the final break just long enough to make an end.

### Vox's "St. Matthew Passion"

The new complete "Saint Matthew Passion" is up against stiffer competition. One of the best known choral works, it has not been neglected by the recorders. Back in the early thirties Victor offered a traditional American church performance made in St. Bartholomew's, New York, where the Passion is an annual event. Abridged, sung in English and with organ accompaniment, the recording did not fill the need; and it was superseded by a more elaborate job under Koussevitzky. This time the work was presented complete and with full complement of orchestra, chorus and soloists; but an English text was used and the performance was stylistically unsatisfying.

During the war the Germans found time to record a shortened version by the choir of Bach's own Thomaskirche in Leipzig. The conductor was Gunther Ramin, the soloists included the outstanding Evangelist of Karl Erb and the fine Jesus of Gerhard Huesch as well as the excellent contralto, Friedel Beckmann. Chorus and orchestra were for the most part very good, the reproduction adequate. Another German recording directed by Bruno Kittel, also abridged, I have not heard. The

part I sampled of the complete translated version recorded by English Decca under Reginald Jacques with Kathleen Ferrier and Elsie Suddaby among the soloists did not please me greatly. I understand that a hearing of a new Danish complete performance under Mogens Wöldike might affect what I have to say, but this must remain for the future.

### A Radio Performance

The Vox recording was made by the Discophiles Francais from a broadcast of a public performance in Berlin. It has more than the usual share of audience noises. The soloists are Elfriede Troetschel, soprano; Diana Eutrati, contralto; Helmut Kreps, tenor; D. Fischer-Dieskau, basso; Friedrich Haertel, basso; Silvia Kind, cembalo; and Paul Hoffmann, organ. The chorus is the Choir of the Berlin Radio with the boys of St. Hedwig's Cathedral, the choral director is Guenther Arndt and the conductor, Fritz Lehmann (Vox DLP 6070, four LP discs, \$24.75). More broadly conceived than Ramin's performance, Lehmann's utilizes larger forces and makes more of the exciting and dramatic moments of the score. With repetition, I think, most of us will prefer the gentler touch, especially because Ramin's guns are not all shot before that most devastating moment of all — the simple and direct shout of "Barrabas." The soloists in the new set are good, but generally little more. The tenor Helmut Kreps sings with laudable style, but he hardly approaches Erb except in the arias where the admirable veteran falls down somewhat. In similar fashion, the words of Jesus as sung by Fischer-Dieskau have not all the nobility that they find in the mouth of Gerhard Huesch, and Diana Eutrati is a less impressive contralto than the lady from Leipzig. Tiana Lemnitz disappointed me in the HMV set, with her tonal unsteadiness; in this music I prefer the no more than adequate Miss Troetschel. The reproduction of the new set is variable, which is hardly surprising; but it does maintain for the most part a good enough average. Generally speaking the choruses are clear and well balanced, though the orchestral background stands out better in the HMV set. I cannot believe that the slight and indefensible cuts (involving a few measures of aria introduction and interludes) were intended by the conductor. Undoubtedly the original recording

was done on tape and there has been some imperfect splicing.

Fritz Reiner's new recording of the six Brandenburg Concertos (Columbia ML 4281/2/3, three LP discs, \$4.85 each) are the first serious rivals for the aging sets issued in 1936 by the Busch Chamber Players. Using a group of selected players, including such well known soloists as Robert Bloom, Julius Baker, Hugo Kolberg and Sylvia Marlowe (the exact number of instrumentalists is given on each of the record labels), Mr. Reiner has produced a performance admirable for its vitality and its good taste. In no other recording has the balance been so just as it is here, nor have I heard the solo instruments stand out in such clear definition. Some will undoubtedly find the overall brilliance a bit too much, but this can be controlled. I doubt that anyone will deny that the British soloists assembled by Busch still have the edge in sheer virtuosity; and I am afraid the very clarity of the new recording is responsible for our being conscious as we are of a blurt of two in the horns, a little stumbling by the violin and a suggestion of effort on the part of the trumpeter. But the whole effect is wonderful, and with the advantages of LP the choice between the new and the old set is easy enough. Only for an instant in the first concerto did I feel a suggestion of unnecessary retard — otherwise there is little to quibble over in Reiner's style. The "Menuetto" is a bit slow and lacks the heartiness others have brought to it, but this one soon accepts. The second movement of the second concerto is for my taste a little too fast, but the easy flow of the third is irresistible. I like the ponderousness of the first movement of the third and the lightness of the "Presto," which almost becomes a scramble, but never quite. Incidentally, there is no cadenza added between the movements. The fourth concerto is altogether delightful, and the fifth maintains its pace throughout the long harpsichord cadenza as I have not heard it since the old Cortot version. Number six is solid and properly hearty. It seems safe to predict popularity for this new version of the concertos. It is certainly deserved.

### New Organ Records

Biggs' recital, named with a quotation from Robert Schumann, "Bach's Roy-



al Instrument," contains the "Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C," the six "Schoeblor Chorale Preludes," the "Trio Sonatas in E-flat and C minor," and the "Preludes and Fugues in C and B minor" (both subtitled "Great") (Columbia ML 4284/5, two LP discs, \$4.85 each). Playing the organ in Boston's Symphony Hall, the artist favors a bigger style than the one he used in his earlier recordings made in the Germanic Museum. Anyone wishing to make a comparison between the two organs should listen to his older records of "Wachet auf," the first Chorale Prelude of the Schoeblor group on Technichord and Victor, and on Technichord—the "E-flat Trio Sonata." The Chorale Preludes, among Bach's loveliest works for organ, are the most attractive portion of the new recital. Mr. Biggs precedes each one with a playing of the chorale upon which it is founded. The steady drive of the more showy works played here is emphasized by the brilliance of the recording. Also noteworthy is the considerable contrast in the registration of the lovely "Adagio" that separates the "C major Toccata" from its "Fugue."

#### Some Motet Recordings

The new motet recordings I found consistently disappointing. "Singet dem Herrn," sung by the Choir of the Berlin State Academy, under Kurt Thomas, is coupled with the opening choruses of Cantatas 50 and 104 in a performance by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir under Carl Schuricht (Capitol-Telefunken L 8077, 10-inch LP disc, \$3.85). A pre-war American recording of this motet by the Westminster Choir was far from satisfactory; but though this one is considerably better, it does not convince us that the choir has overcome the difficulties of the music. The singing is labored, over accented, not too clearly reproduced, and hardly likely to make converts to the Bach motets. The two cantata choruses are even less satisfying stylistically. As for the New York Schola Cantorum record (containing the motets "Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden" and "Komm, Jesu, komm" and the chorales "In dulci jubilo," "Herzlich thut mich Verlangen" and "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," (Columbia ML 2102, 10-inch LP disc, \$3.85) its chief value is in its novelty. I must confess to a shock at the use of a harpsichord to accompany the

first motet, and while I know that the score contains a continuo part, I am afraid I have not succeeded in getting used to it. Surely it would sound better with an organ background or perhaps a choir of strings. The incongruity is somehow heightened by an outstandingly unclear program note, in which we are told that "Bach's motets differ from his cantatas chiefly in this fact, that they are for unaccompanied chorus." Aside from all this, the performance is rather nervous and confused, and perhaps too closely recorded. Nor are the chorales done with any particular distinction.

#### London's Cantata Issues

Finally there are the two canatas, appearing as "Praise our God" (No. 11) and "Hold in affection Jesus Christ" (No. 67), sung by Kathleen Ferrier, contralto; Ena Mitchell, soprano; William Herbert, tenor; William Parsons, basso; and the Cantata Singers with the Jacques Orchestra, directed by Reginald Jacques. (London LPS 160-61, two 10-inch LP discs, \$4.95 each). The second cantata has as a special dividend an attractive and reserved performance of the familiar "Jesu, joy of man's desiring." Discounting the translation and the sheer Britishness of the voices, not to mention a couple of cuts in Cantata 11, the style is authentic enough. I am never quite ready to accept the rather stilted effect of the English as I hear it in Bach's recitatives, and in the arias even Ferrier's good diction does not make the texts plain enough. (It is interesting, in Cantata 11, to hear the familiar "Agnus Dei" from the "B minor Mass" in its earlier form, but it would be more so if the text were better matched with the music.) In all respects Miss Ferrier maintains her own high standard, and if the other soloists are hardly in her class, they are at least acceptable. Chorus and orchestra are good, the balance better in Cantata 67 than 11.

Many months remain of this Bach year, and it is impossible to tell how many equally important releases will be added to the list. The great contribution of the phonograph to the Bach revival is the raising of standards of authenticity and adequacy in performance. We can be particular and accept only the best. This situation is bound to have a salutary effect upon performances of Bach in general.





## FAMOUS PIANISTS OF YESTERDAY

By HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

### GREAT MASTERS OF THE KEYBOARD:

Vol. I — Debussy, Ravel, Fauré; Vol. II — Saint-Saens, Busoni; Vol. III — Grieg, Leschetizky, d'Albert, Nikisch, Reger; Vol. IV — Paderewski, de Pachmann, de Falla, Granados, Scharwenka, Marshall; Vol. V — Richard Strauss, Mahler, Reger, Scriabin. Columbia LP discs ML-4291/95, price \$4.85 each.

ALL of these were originally recorded on piano rolls by the Welte Company, from 1904-1911. The Welte Company was a German firm which claimed, in its day, to have solved the problems of piano-roll recording. By 1911, according to Columbia's program notes, it had built up a library of some 3,000 compositions. This library was saved from destruction during the war, re-recorded on tape by Columbia, and pressed on five LP records.

The generic title of these five discs — Great Masters of the Keyboard—is not as forced as some might think when examining the list of pianists represented. Of Busoni, d'Albert, Saint-Saens, Paderewski, de Pachmann, Scharwenka and Scriabin, of course, there can be no cavil. Many of the others, though, while not primarily known as professional concert pianists, were remarkable executants — Reger, Strauss, Granados, and Nikisch, for example. And while Debussy and Ravel never kept their technique up to concert pitch, they too were capable of performances that would securely establish the reputations of many present-day pianists.

On the whole, the Welte Company had a product of which they could have been proud. Considering the date of the recordings — 1904-1911 — there is a surprisingly fine quality to the tone, and there is even a touch of nuance and dynamics. The trouble is, though, that in all of the five discs the tone and touch of the various pianists sound pretty much alike. Thus the pianists with the really strong personalities — Saint-Saens, Busoni, d'Albert, for example — come through best. In spite of the lack of pronounced differentiation, there generally is enough vitality present in all of the recordings to suggest such essential elements in the work of the various pianists as tempo, phrasing, conception, and mechanical ability, if nothing else. I have spent some fascinating hours with these discs, and I imagine that the majority of music lovers also will.

Taking the contents disc by disc, Vol. I presents Debussy in his "Dances de Delphes," "Le Vent dans la plaine," "La cathédrale engloutie," "La danse de Puck," "Minstrels," and the "Children's Corner Suite"; Fauré in his "A minor Barcarolle"; and Ravel in his "Valse nobles et sentimentales." Pianists are going to study these with great interest. If Debussy, say, believed in the rhythmic liberties he himself took on this disc, a lot of pianists and critics will have to revise their theories. I say "if" because there is a suggestion that some of these liberties stem from a slight uneasiness with the technical problems. Similarly with Ravel in his "Valse nobles." Fauré, a very old man

when he made this recording of the "Barcarolle," plays it graciously if a little haltingly.

In Vol. II, Busoni plays Liszt's "La Campanella," Chopin's "D flat Prelude," and the Beethoven - Liszt "Ruins of Athens." The long scale runs in the Liszt pieces betray, in their bleakness and metallic quality, the piano-roll process, but the essentially gigantic conception of the pianist can't be disguised. Saint-Saens plays a group of his compositions: the slow movement from the A minor Symphony, the "Valse Mignonne," the finale to the first act of "Samson et Dalila," "Le Rouet d'Omphale," and the "Rhapsodie d'Auvergne." He was a staggering pianist, one of the greatest of all time, and here one can get an idea of his finesse, technical freedom and inimitable elasticity.

#### D'Albert—The Post-Liszt Giant

Vol. III has Leschetizky in some of his own salon pieces and music by Stephen Heller; d'Albert in his "F sharp Scherzo" (a rattling good showpiece) and an excerpt from "Tiefland"; Grieg in some of his pleasant little Norwegian pieces; Nikisch in a pair of Brahms' "Hungarian Dances" and a waltz from Delibes' "Coppélia"; and Reger in two of his rather turgid piano pieces. The majority of the music on this disc is of a salon nature; and most of it, so popular around the turn of the century, has dropped from the repertory. Leschetizky reveals himself a pianist of extreme polish and finish. D'Albert was one of the post-Liszt giants. Grieg plays his music in a pretty manner, and Nikisch makes something symphonic out of his Brahms and Delibes. He was an admirable pianist, by the way — forceful and technically well equipped. Reger too was a superb pianist, and the "G minor Humoresque" reveals his sensitive approach and accurate fingers.

Paderewski plays his Minuet in G to start off Vol. IV, and de Pachmann continues with an extended Chopin group — waltzes, several preludes, an etude, and one of his own Chopinesque imitations entitled "Improvisation in Form of a Gondola Song." He plays with his well-remembered fluency and equally well-remembered eccentricity, often editing the music as he goes along, altering it to suit himself, and in general doing the most peculiar things. This type of playing would not go in recital today, but it's rather wonderful in its crazy way.

The Scharwenka, Granados, de Falla and Frank Marshall (I can get no information about the latter) contributions are all expert — and they all sound alike.

Vol. V presents Mahler in the last movement of his Fourth Symphony, Strauss in piano reductions of things like the Love Scene from "Heldenleben" and "Salome's Dance," Reger in a pair of piano pieces, and Scriabin in a group of his preludes, a mazurka and the "D sharp minor Etude." Strauss emerges remarkably well as a pianist; he could have had a great career, if this is really an indication of his strength and proficiency at the keyboard. Scriabin's playing is still familiar to many old-timers, and his mechanical fluency should come as no surprise to those who know about his career as a virtuoso.

To summarize, it should be stressed that the success of these examples is directly in proportion to the strength and individuality of the executants. Modern recording would supply more values to the tasteful playing of Reger and Granados, and would bring out the personalities of some of the others; but experienced virtuosos like Busoni, Saint-Saens and de Pachmann had pianistic and musical personalities that emerge despite the limitations of the Welte process. So had Debussy; so had d'Albert; so had Scharwenka; so had Richard Strauss. A lot of people are going to be fascinated with what they accomplished in spite of recording limitations.

## An Open Letter

(Continued from page 283)

of 78 singles and fillers-in in album sets through the years. The strange bedfellows that have been mated on 78 rpm discs would provide material for an amusing book. The good elders of our Revolutionary days would probably have recommended a bungling board to record manufacturers had the phonograph been functioning in those days.

As for the letter from Mr. Kun, an electrical engineer, it is difficult to believe that one of his profession could be so shortsighted. His statement that LP reproduction is a backward step is foolish. His opinions on the musical quality of these recordings either shows that he has never heard them on first-class equipment or that his opinions are formed from one or two records which are poorer in qual-

ity than the average. Our criticism of his summations is backed by two reputable engineers associated with us; both of these gentlemen are willing to prove our statements.

It is sincerely hoped that Mr. Mackenzie will correct the misstatements of his two correspondents. It would be a great pity to retard music lovers from the palpable pleasures that LP recordings offer.



## Recent Importations

**THE CHANGE** of directorial reins at the Metropolitan Opera has given rise to more conversation, rumor and conjecture in local musical circles than any other recent event in musical history. The new director, **Rudolph Bing**, has received a good deal of unfavorable publicity, a large part of which was disseminated by irresponsible gossip columnists and apparently emanated from an unreliable source — disgruntled singers who were not to be re-engaged for the coming season. The sum and substance of this insidious whispering campaign is that Bing would discriminate against native artists, peopling his casts with foreign (and especially German and Austrian) singers, concentrating on German opera to the incipient exclusion of the tried and true vehicles of the Latin countries.

This is itself a preposterous idea, for Bing is too good a business man to let chauvinistic feelings influence his decisions. Be that as it may, he has announced an Italian opera, Verdi's seldom heard "Don Carlo," for next year's season; moreover, it is quite probable that it will be the selection for opening night. **Margaret Webster**, the Shakespearian authority, has been signed to direct the production, and **Jussi Bjöerling** is said to be preparing the title role. Since **Boris Christoff**, the Bulgarian basso who has been receiving sensational notices abroad, has been signed by Bing, it is not improbable that he will be assigned the role of King Philip II of Spain in "Don Carlo."

All this preamble leads up to the fact that **Christoff** has just made a record

(HMV DB21007) of King Philip's soliloquy "Ella giammai m'amò" and the ensuing aria "Dormirò sol nel manto mio regal," one of Verdi's most moving pages. Christoff has plenty of competition on records; in the past year **Pinza** (Columbia 72802D), **Cesare Siepi** (Cetra-Soria BB2068) and **Raphael Arie** (London T5232) have entered the lists, and in addition, earlier versions by **Tancredi Pasero** (Ital. Col. GQX 10239) and **Nazareno de Angelis** (Ital. Col. GQX10178) are again available on imported lists. Against this formidable array of talent Christoff holds up very well indeed. As in his earlier "Boris" discs, there are indications that his voice is considerably smaller than that of several of his competitors. It is of excellent quality, however, and well projected, so that, on records at least, one does not feel a deficiency in quality. Christoff's interpretation is by far the most dramatic of those listed above; in fact he overdoes things a bit, emitting some ludicrous throat-choking sobs that would have done credit to Gigli in his prime. The recitative is handled very effectively, with commendable restraint, and competent orchestral support is provided. As a sample of things to come, this disc should be worth your attention.

Another foreign singer scheduled to appear at the Met is the young Spanish soprano **Victoria de los Angeles**, whom I have mentioned in previous columns. She made her first public appearance in her native Barcelona in 1944, while studying piano, guitar and voice at the local conservatory. That same year she made her debut as the Countess in "Nozze di Figaro" at the Teatro del Liceo. After winning first prize in an international competition at Geneva she appeared in opera in Spain until 1948, when on March 10th, unknown to English audiences, she made a sensational debut on radio in a BBC studio performance of de Falla's opera "La Vida Breve." Her first recording (HMV DB672) of two arias from that opera, "Alli sta rivendo" and "Vivan los qui rien," indicated her potentialities in that exciting, unfamiliar music.

After leaving England de los Angeles sang Marguerite at the Paris Opera, scoring a personal triumph. A South American tour followed, then a concert at La Scala, after which she was signed to sing the title role in "Ariadne auf Naxos" in May of this year. Her one London concert this winter, at Wigmore Hall, was a

great success, but at her single appearance at Covent Garden as Mimi in "Bohème," late in the season, various unhappy elements combined to dim the lustre of her achievement. First of all, she sang in Italian while the rest of the cast remained true to the vernacular. Reports received indicate that support from colleagues and conductor was not notable for its consistency. Furthermore one critic made the remark that she was too robustly healthy to portray the ideal Mimi, although he said she acted "quite well" and "made the character thoroughly convincing."

Besides her extraordinary discs of the "Air des Bijoux" from "Faust" (HMV DB6938) and songs of Granados and Fuste (HMV DA1913), which I reviewed in detail last December, there are two new releases, one of Turina's "Farruca" and Valverde's "Clavelitos" (HMV DA1926), the other of Respighi's "E se un giorno tornasse" and "Stornellatrice" (HMV DA 1930). Piano accompaniments are by **Gerald Moore** and **Ivor Newton**. I particularly recommend the Respighi record, in which songs of the utmost simplicity are made memorable by the artistry of the singer.

Another batch of material has arrived from Switzerland, the most ambitious (and probably the least stimulating) of which is Josef Liebeskind's "First Symphony," played by the **Zurich Radio Orchestra** conducted by **Dr. Hans Zaig** (Swiss HMV FKX501/5). The composer, a Leipzig music editor (1866-1916), exhibits no talent for composition save an understanding of the technical requirements of construction and an embarrassing familiarity with the works of the masters. It is the typical product of a professorial type who sat himself down one day and decided he owed it to himself to write some music. The first movement is in the style of Saint-Saëns without the latter's melodic gift, the adagio an introspective, scholarly movement notable for good craftsmanship. If one heard the scherzo without being informed as to its origin, one might guess it to be the work of one of Beethoven's not too gifted pupils. Brahms and Schumann vie for honors in the solidity romantic finale.

A genuine, somewhat mysterious novelty, about which I have been unable to gather any pertinent information, is an orchestral suite entitled "Chinese Dream Pictures" by some one named **Hsiao-Shusien**, played by the **Winterthur Muni-**

**cipal Orchestra** conducted by **Hermann Scherchen** (Swiss HMV DB6088/9). The record labels say that the suite is based on Chinese folk melodies, and that it is dedicated to the memory of **Hsiao-You-Mey**. I think it safe to say that it is the only authentic orchestral piece based on Chinese themes written by a Chinese. The work consists of a series of seven impressionist orchestral miniatures of nostalgic charm, reminiscent in style of the scoring of John Alden Carpenter ("Adventures in a Perambulator") and Gabriel Pierné ("Ramuntcho," etc.). The fifth section, entitled "Lullaby," is very attractive. In spite of the imaginative writing and the obvious musical erudition of the composer, however, the very nature of the subject tends to make this score a trifle monotonous to western ears.

An important contributor to the recorded literature of lieder is the Swiss baritone **Paul Sandoz**, if his disc of Schubert's "Am Meer" and "Der Wanderer" (Swiss HMV HEX108) is a fair criterion. Born on the French side of Switzerland, near Neuchâtel, he sings German like a veritable Teuton, with a smoothly controlled voice of good size and appealing quality. He has sung at the Strasbourg and Lucerne operas; since 1941 the Basel municipal opera has held his contract. If the good wines of the Neuchâtel region can nurture such an artist, it would be well for some of our more highly publicized baritones to lay in a supply. I, for one, am looking forward to more **Sandoz** records. His "Dichterliebe" and "Gellert-Lieder" (Beethoven) have been highly praised by foreign writers.

Most people would agree, I believe, that Beethoven's "G major Concerto" is his most rewarding work for piano and orchestra. We have had a fine but mechanically sub-par performance from **Gieseking** (Col. MM-441) and two uneven ones from **Schnabel**, both suffering from indifferent orchestral playing. There is also a set by **Casadesus** with the **Philadelphia Orchestra** (Col. LP ML4074). The French pianist, however, does not seem to penetrate to the core of the music. A new release by **Artur Schnabel**, with the **Royal Philharmonic** under **Beecham** (HMV DB9405/8) bids fair to take its place as the preferred version, as all concerned have given of their best to make this an eminently satisfying venture. The over-all concept is a bit slick and oversophisticated; but this, unfortunately, is

# New music for May—on "45"

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*Invitation To The Dance, Op. 65*—Weber. 12-1110, \$1.25. 49-0919 (45 rpm) 95¢.

## ANTAL DORATI

*Psalmus Hungaricus: Psalmus Hungaricus, Op. 13; Jesus and The Traders*—Kodály. Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Gabor Carelli, Tenor. North Texas State College Chorus, Frank McKinley, Director. DM 1331, \$4.75. WDM 1331 (45 rpm) \$3.35.

## ARTHUR FIEDLER

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## HEIFETZ

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## SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY

*Symphony No. 36, In C, K. 425 ("Linz")*—Mozart. Boston Symphony Orchestra. DM 1354, \$4.75. WDM 1354 (45 rpm) \$3.35.

## JEANETTE MACDONALD

*Songs My Mother Taught Me*—Dvořák; *Tes Yeux*—Rabay. Orchestra, Robert Armbruster, Cond. 10-1529, \$1.00. 49-0921 (45 rpm) 95¢.

## PIERRE MONTEUX

*Alborada Del Gracioso*—Ravel. San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. 12-1107, \$1.25. 49-0916 (45 rpm) 95¢.

## CHARLES MUNCH

*Symphony No. 7, In A, Op. 92: Final side: Allegretto (Gratulations Menuet, 1823)*—Beethoven. Boston Symphony Orchestra. DM 1360, \$7.25. WDM 1360 (45 rpm) \$5.25.\*

## JAN PIERCE

*Rigoletto: La Donna È Mobile; Questa O Quella*—Verdi. RCA Victor Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf, Cond. 10-1528, \$1.00. 49-0920 (45 rpm) 95¢.

## WILLIAM PRIMROSE

*Air For G String (from Suite No. 3, in D)*—J. S. Bach; *1. Huella (Valle); 2. Ao Pe Da Faguiera*—Aguirre. David Stimer at the piano. 12-1109, \$1.25. 49-0918 (45 rpm) 95¢.

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*Manfred, Op. 58 (Symphonic Poem)*—Tchaikovsky. NBC Symphony Orchestra. DM 1372, \$7.25. WDM 1372 (45 rpm) \$5.25.\*

*Daphnis and Chloé Suite No. 2: 1. Lever du jour. 2. Pantomime (Pt. 1 and concl.) 3. Danse Générale*—Ravel. NBC Symphony Orchestra. DM 1374, \$3.50. WDM 1374 (45 rpm) \$2.40.\*

*"Eroica" Symphony No. 3, in E-Flat, Op. 55*—Beethoven. DM 1375, \$8.50. WDM 1375 (45 rpm) \$6.20.\*

*Parsifal Prelude and Good Friday Spell*—Wagner. NBC Symphony Orchestra. DM 1376, \$4.75. WDM 1376 (45 rpm) \$3.35.\*

*Divertimento No. 15, in B-Flat, K. 287 For Strings And Two Horns*—Mozart. NBC Symphony Orchestra. DM 1355, \$6.00. WDM 1355 (45 rpm) \$4.30.\*

*Symphony No. 101, in D ("Clock")*—Haydn. Final side: *Scherzo from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"*—Mendelssohn. NBC Symphony Orch. DM 1368, \$6.00. WDM 1368 (45 rpm) \$4.30.\*

## ARTHUR WHITEMORE and JACK LOWE

*Three Waltzes, Op. 39: 1. Waltz in E; 2. Waltz in B Minor; 3. Waltz in A-Flat*—Brahms; *Sonata In D Minor: 1. Allegro; 2. Adagio; 3. Vivace*—Pasquini. 12-1108, \$1.25. 49-0917 (45 rpm) 95¢.

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the approach now favored in our concert halls. There is, by the way, none of the waywardness that Beecham has sometimes exhibited when forced to share the spotlight with a soloist. Both lions have equal billing here and pull together with mutual accord.

Noteworthy singles at hand this month include an outstanding disc by the soprano **Irmgaard Seefried**, who is rapidly establishing for herself a place of honor on my list of favorite singers. In the aria "Auf Starkem Fittige" from Haydn's "Creation" (which somehow becomes "On mighty Pens" in the high-falutin' translation) she for once has received orchestral support worthy of her efforts (Eng. Col. LX1245). **Josef Krips** and the **Vienna Philharmonic** play the long introduction and the highly effective accompaniment in a truly sumptuous manner. Of course, Haydn deserves a share of the credit, too.

As predicted, English Columbia have brought down their prices in line with the recent H.M.V. reductions. This leaves London and their nephew, Deutsche Grammophon, in a very vulnerable position in a market glutted with first-class recordings. —A.W.P.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**AMERICAN RECORD INDEX, 50**  
Years of Recorded Music (1897-1949).  
Compiled and Edited by Bernard Lebow,  
assisted by Stephen Fasset. Published  
by Elain Music Shop, 9 East 44 St.,  
New York. \$2.00 a copy or \$6.50 a year.  
(4 copies).

**T**HOSE who have been seeking a comprehensive guide to classical music on records, issued in America since the beginning of the phonograph, will find this Index the answer to their prayers. Hard on the heels of the English announcement of "The World's Encyclopedia of Recorded Music" (still in manuscript), comes this actuality — the most ambitious catalogue of recordings ever realized in this country. I am certain that once it is completed it will become the most valued encyclopedic reference on the recorded history of America. All makes of records issued domestically, whether available or cut-out, are included; and the various numbers (if there was more than one) as well as the dates of recording are given.

The complete index will cover the en-

tire field of recorded music by recognized artists of all countries — singers, solo instrumentalists, instrumental ensembles, orchestras, and conductors. Heretofore, we have had fairly complete listings of singers, but nothing which did justice to conductors, chamber music groups, etc. The first section of the Index, which is now off the press, comprises listings through letters A and B. It permits us for the first time, to acquaint ourselves with the repertoire on records of all singers as well as such important artists as Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Adrian Boult, and the Budapest Quartet, to say nothing of pianists Arrau and Bachaus and other instrumentalists.

The index is to be issued quarterly in 12 books of about 150 pages each. The first volume (at hand) takes 159 pages. As soon as the alphabetical artist index is completed, there will be a cross index on composers. It is important to remember this, as some operatic titles are given in this section without composer's names.

### Fascinating Material

Browsing through the first section, no record enthusiast can fail to be fascinated with the wealth of material that has appeared on records through the long years. And perhaps no one who has not attempted to compile a similar catalogue can fully appreciate the exhaustive labor that has gone into just this section. Messrs. Lebow and Fasset not only deserve all record collectors applause and thanks, but their support.

I should not like the task of ferreting out omissions or errors (if there are actually any), however I noted under the French tenor Auguste Affre omission of the fact that he participated in a complete performance of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet," which Pathé issued in this country around 1919. Also under listings of records by the Metropolitan tenor, Lucca Botta, no mention is made of his recordings from "Tosca." Had I not owned these at one time, I would not mention them. In the greater scheme of things these are perhaps of no great importance, but for the sake of the record they should be mentioned. I'm willing to wager that Messrs. Lebow and Fasset will in the finale analysis achieve a record close to 99 and 44/100 completeness, if not purity.

—J. N.

(Continued on page 316)

The American Record Guide





## RECORD NOTES AND

# REVIEWS



**HAYDN:** Symphony No. 101 in D (Clock); and **MOZART:** Symphony No. 35 in D, K. 385 (Haffner) RCA Victor LP disc LM-1038, \$5.45.

**MOZART:** Divertimento No. 15 in B flat, K. 287 (for strings and two horns) RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-13, \$4.45.

**WAGNER:** Parsifal —Prelude and Good Friday Spell; RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-15, \$4.45.

**BEETHOVEN:** Symphony No. 3 in E flat, Op. 55 (Eroica). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1042, \$5.45.

**RAVEL:** Daphnis and Chloe — Suite No. 2; and **BEETHOVEN:** Leonore Overture No. 3, Op. 72a. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1043, \$5.45.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** Manfred —Symphonic Poem, Op. 58. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1037, \$5.45.

All the above played by the **NBC Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Arturo Toscanini**.

IT would have been possible to have reviewed these recordings last month from test pressings, but experience has taught us that this is not the most desirable way of listening to records. Several of the discs listed above were available in the stores some time ago; others were delayed. Through the courtesy of RCA Victor, we have been able to get finished records in some cases ahead of stores.

After listening carefully to these performances, we were forcefully struck with the fact that Toscanini, of all great

men in music now recording, has fared unevenly in matters of reproduction. After the startling realism of his Carnegie Hall recording of Grofé's "Grand Canyon Suite," we expected miracles in sound to emerge from his new records. Such, however, is not the case.

The maestro's re-recording of the 'Eroica,' so long awaited after the acoustic deadness of his former version, lacks the richness of sound and resonant fullness of the Grofé suite. This recording, the Tchaikovsky, the Ravel, and the Wagner, we are told, were made in Carnegie Hall. The results are hardly the same as in the Grofé. However, it is doubtful that many will complain, for the quality of sound is a decided notch ahead of Radio City's Studio 8-H, where most of Toscanini's records were previously made. The Haydn and Mozart works were done in a studio—a different one from 8-H—that has somewhat better acoustic qualities. No one can complain about the quality of sound in these latter works, for the character of the 18th-century music is well served by the intimacy of a small room.

These recordings have prompted us to prepare an article on Toscanini, his recordings, and his style of music-making. This will appear in our next issue. In the meantime, let it be said that the miracle of unified control and polishing, which are characteristics of Toscanini's artistry, are illustrated in all the above works.

The criterion of any conductor's art with each listener is the satisfaction derived from its expressive qualities. No one should be so influenced by hero worship that he is unable to assess communicative values in terms of personal compensation.

Haydn's wonderful "Clock" Symphony and the music from Wagner's "Parsifal" are examples of Toscanini's most communicative artistry. His nuancing of line and inflections of dynamics are amazing. His realization of infinite shadings in the middle voices in the Haydn slow movement and the finale are rare experiences in interpretative art. Elsewhere in the symphony, he communicates less to us than Ormandy and Ansermet. The poise and serenity which he brings to the music of Wagner refutes the often heard assertion that the conductor is continuously intense in his music-making.

The Mozart works are played with detailed finesse, and polished to a point of refinement which places the composer's emotion aloof from the subjective self-expression of conducting art. The same can be said of the Ravel music where tonal coloring is replaced by accentuation of detail and rare dynamic control.

The Tchaikovsky fares well in the Toscanini treatment. It is not one of the composer's greatest works. Moreover, its length is made apparent by its overweening emotional insistence. In the "Manfred" Tchaikovsky exploits the torment of Byron's hero with less expressive variety than we find in the "Romeo and Juliet" and "Francesca da Rimini." The stark realism of the drama in the Toscanini reading relegates the earlier version by Sevtsky to obscurity. If one likes this music, one will find that it lives in this new performance with vivid forcefulness; for Toscanini surmounts its technical difficulties in a way unmatched by any other conductor we have heard play the work.

Toscanini's interpretations of the two Beethoven works are as individual as they are consummately achieved as orchestral performances. The "Eroica" is intense, polished and worked out in miraculous detail. But in this performance, which one realizes is the noted conductor's last word (to date) on the symphony, the work's emotional qualities seem often sublimated to precise control and technical mastery. The opening chords are excessively taut and the passions of the first movement are driven beyond the boundaries of most interpreters' expressive requirements. The concentrative energy is prodigious. The Funeral March does not move with leaden feet; the pace is quickened to heighten its poignancy. The sweep of the scherzo is amazing, but only as a virtuosic feat which

leaves one remembering only the extraordinary control of the performance. The rendition of the finale, with its profusion of ideas, is memorable for its wealth of detail.

Toscanini's almost unrelievedly austere interpretation of the "Leonore No. 3" is impeccable in its clarity of line and detail. This work can, however, stand more coloration than the maestro brings to it. But such ordered music-making has its own powers of holding the listener transfixed until the final note. Toscanini has that kind of magnetic power, but it is usually more apparent in the concert hall than it is in most of his recent recordings. Certainly, none of these new ones have the elements that make his concert hall performances and occasional recordings such as the Beethoven "Seventh" and (of all things) the Grofé Canyon Suite" such memorable events. —P.H.R.

**BEETHOVEN:** Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21, and Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93; **Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra** conducted by **Willem Mengelberg**. Capitol-Telefunken LP disc P8079, \$4.95.

▲ Mengelberg's orchestral skill and assurance are impressive. His interpretation of Beethoven's first symphony is broadly planned and somewhat vigorous. His reading of the Eighth is impressive for its control and detailed exactitude, but it moves with heavy stride and lacks the rhythmic fluency and lightness of the Toscanini version. Both performances are rather stolid and unyielding in their tonal weight, but for firmly controlled orchestral playing they impress.

This prewar or wartime (such as it may be) recording sounds very impressive, though the way the flute and woodwinds sound on occasion, you might be seated in the last seat in the balcony. —P.H.R.

**BEETHOVEN:** Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92; **Boston Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Charles Munch**. RCA Victor 45 rpm set WDM-1360, five discs, \$5.25.

**I**F Charles Munch had adopted a little faster tempo for his performance of the fourth movement of the Beethoven Symphony or scaled the tempi of the other movements down to fit the speed that he does use in the last section, I would say that here is a set to equal Toscanini's su-

perb but aged recording (RCA Victor set 317).

In his RCA Victor debut, Munch makes no other errors that I can hear. Quite the contrary!—His performance is excellent in detail, beautiful in sound and phraseology, handsome in the way it moves along. It seems fresh, restudied, and as I have indicated, quite wonderful in every respect except architectural proportion.

The sound of the Boston players under Munch is a tonic. The tone is leaner, more luminous than it was under Koussevitsky. This is no disparagement of the sounds that the older conductor generally drew from his men. I simply mean that it is refreshing to hear this fine organization play, with enthusiasm and precision, different from the way it has been heard for 25 years. It is a tribute to Munch's conducting powers and to the responsiveness of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

I hope that all fanciers of orchestral playing and Beethoven's magnificent Seventh Symphony will listen to this set. It has many wonderful things to offer.

—C. J. L.

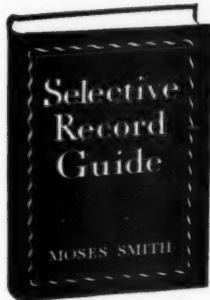
**BOCCHERINI:** Symphony in A major; **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Henry Swoboda**. **HAYDN:** Octet in F major (2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets, 2 Bassoons, 2 Horns); **Vienna Philharmonic Wind Group**. Westminster LP disc WL 50-2, \$5.95.

WE are reminded by the coupling of these works that Boccherini has been overshadowed by Haydn through the years. Undoubtedly, he was influenced by Haydn, but there is a distinction between the two composers. Boccherini had a feeling for color unlike Haydn, and his melodic material was often more sensuous than the Austrian's. His knowledge of the strings, especially the cello has long delighted musicians. His clarity of style, his melodic gracefulness and sincere simplicity, despite no true depth of thought, makes for the most pleasant and diverting listening. I welcome the advent of a Boccherini symphony on records, just as I welcomed the Cetra recording of the arrangement for orchestra of his "C major Quintet," which gained in color by the elaboration of string texture. Each of the four movements of this symphony is a little gem in its own way. Dr. Swoboda knows and likes Boccherini and he keeps the rhythms fluent. The recording is overly bright with fair clarity of line, but the

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hall in which the orchestra played lacks resonance to enrich the string tone.

The Haydn piece is in the nature of a divertimento, skillfully scored and worked out. The edition used is one revised from the composer's original manuscripts by the Viennese musicologist, Alexander Wunderer. This strikes me as an example of Haydn in one of his most delightfully whimsical moods, enjoying the opportunity to exploit instrumental coloring. The florid style suggests the theatre, an appropriate work, say, for the Esterhazy theater as an introductory piece to something more pretentious. It is not so elaborate or as ambitious as the recently recorded Beethoven "Octet," but it has its own virtues and rewards. The Vienna Philharmonic musicians play in a friendly style, keeping the performance intimate. Here the recording seems quite natural and right. —P. H. R.

**BRAHMS:** Tragic Overture, Op. 81; **SCHUBERT:** Rosamunde — Overture; **BEETHOVEN:** The Creations of Prometheus — Overture, Allegretto and Finale, Op. 43, and The Ruins of Athens — Turkish March, Op. 113; **Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra**, conducted by **Willem Mengelberg**. Capitol-Telefunken LP disc P8078, \$4.85.

▲ The Brahms was issued last August on 78 rpm, and more recently the Schubert on both 78 and 45 rpm. Of the Brahms, C. J. L. said: "Mengelberg dramatizes this piece, uses it as a personal vehicle, never lets the listener know what's going to happen next, and pulls out of his men some sensational sonorities." Much the same can be said about his Beethoven. The "Prometheus" Overture is given a solid, resonant performance. It sounds good from this recording. The Ballet Music from the same score, with the engaging theme which Beethoven was later to treat with such imaginative variety in the finale of the "Eroica," has a gracious lilt in the beginning, but the conductor has his own individual ideas about liberties in time and pace, and the familiar "Turkish March" is rather heavy-handed. As C. J. L. said further of the Brahms, the conductor winds up by not making any of the latter program "sound like better or worse music." It adds up to orchestra playing which has its interest. Whether it sustains one is a problem only each listener can answer. Capitol engineers deserve a tribute for their handling of the Telefunken recordings. —P.H.R.

**CARTER:** Boston Commandery March; and **BIGELOW:** Our Director March; **Boston Pops Orchestra** conducted by **Arthur Fiedler**. Victor 45 rpm disc 49-0482, 95c.

▲ These two rousing marches are by way of being a salute to Bostonians. The Carter is the official Masons' march requested in recording by the Boston Masons. The other is an old pops audience favorite, written by a member of the orchestra. Fiedler knows what it's all about and turns in his usual competent performances, and Victor has achieved good engineering. —P. G.

**EGK:** Overture to The Magic Violin; **German Philharmonic Orchestra of Prague** conducted by **Joseph Keilberth**. Capitol-Telefunken 45 rpm disc 6F-86012, \$ .95.

▲ Werner Egk was one of the conductors at the Berlin State Opera before the war. He has composed for orchestra and for the stage, his best-known work being the opera "Die Zaubergeige" ("The Magic Violin"), first performed at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1935. How good or bad the opera may be we shall probably never know; the overture, at any rate, has no outstanding quality to recommend it. Echos of Johann Strauss in garish modern dress plus a few of the less agreeable characteristics favored by members of the conservative modern French school make up the bulk of Egk's inspiration.

This overture sounds as though it had been written by a journeyman instrumentalist or conductor whose daily business it was to perform the good, bad and indifferent music of others set in front of him. It was.

The 45 rpm recording suffers from considerable distortion at either end of the piece. The performance by the Nazi-sponsored orchestra that replaced the Czech Philharmonic in Prague during the war is competent if uninspired. —A. W. P.

**GRIEG:** Peer Gynt — Suites Nos. 1 and 2; **The London Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Basil Cameron**. London LP disc LLP 153, \$5.95.

▲ I am certain that admirers of these suites will welcome this excellently recorded disc with its clear, clean reproduction. The FFRR technique does full justice to the delicacy of Grieg's orchestrations and his lyric beauties. Cameron is a sound conductor who knows how to tailor expertly such pieces, but his approach is rather over-conscientious as

though long familiarity dictated caution. One misses in the first suite the imagination and rhythmic subtleties of Beecham; but one can admire music of this kind played as it is here, particularly when it is recorded so well. —J.N.

**HAYDN:** Symphony No. 99 in E flat; London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Alistair Royaltan Kisch. London 10" LP disc LPS 171, \$4.95.

▲ Still another Haydn recording to swell the ever-mounting list! This symphony, not unfamiliar in the concert hall and known to most of us in the treasured Beecham reading (Columbia set M-264), is one of the twelve composed by Haydn at the behest of the English music-promoter Salomon. The high standards set by the series are more than met, but as is usually the case with this composer, the first and last movements are the most enjoyable.

Royaltan Kisch is one of the more promising of the new crop of English conductors. It can not be said, however, that he makes any outstanding contribution to this performance, contenting himself with establishing basic tempi and adjusting routine matters of balance. The result, while competent and listenable, is not especially stimulating. As a particular point of criticism, I should have liked a bit more speed in the finale, where a touch of breathlessness added to the bustling cheerfulness of the presto would have made the difference between hurrying to get some place rather than hurrying to get away from something.

The whole point of LP's continuity advantage was missed by London Records when they decided to break the slow movement in two. It would have been a happy thought to have employed a 12-inch disc and to have filled the vacant space with a much-needed performance of the "Toy" Symphony in which the percussion and other solo parts would be played by leading British musicians, such as Sir Ralph, Sir Arnold, Sir John and Sir Thomas.

Another sore point: can't something be done about the program notes? Those gushing paeans of adulation couched in syrupy "musical appreciation" clichés might have passed muster twenty years ago; I thought we had passed into a more mature acceptance of music these days.

—A. W. P.

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**MEDELSSOHN:** Symphony No. 4 in A major, Op. 90 ("Italian"); **Turin Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Mario Rossi**. London LP 10" disc LPS, \$4.85.

**ROSSI** from the evidence of his "Falstaff" performance last month, seems to be a true theatre conductor. As a symphony conductor, if one takes this performance as an example, he remains the man of the theatre whose work is scarcely to the credit of the "Italian Symphony." Both the opening and closing movements are taken at a pace which does not permit the best results from the players. Of course, the conductor may not have had sufficient rehearsals to get his laggard string section to achieve rhythmic stability. Toscanini takes these movements at a similar pace, if memory serves; but the results he gets with his string players is better, though sometimes one feels they do not define all the notes as clearly as they might.

Rossi's slow movement has a nice feeling, but the ending is needlessly retarded. Still he creates a mood which is individual if nothing else. The third movement is on the dull side. With Koussevitzky's brightly polished performance of this symphony in mind, one is apt to be hypercritical. It's a case of having been wooed and won by one performance that seems completely satisfying.

The FFRR technique provides first-rate recording, but the quality of this one seems best served with the Columbia characteristics on my equipment. With the regular FFRR characteristics, the strings were wiry and strident. Those acquiring this record would do well to make tests for best results.

—P.H.R.

**MOZART:** Symphony No. 36 (Linz) in C (K.425); **Boston Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Serge Koussevitzky**. RCA Victor set WDM-1354, three 45 rpm discs, \$3.35.

▲ With all due respect to the eminent director of the Tanglewood Music Festival and his wonderful ability to recreate certain Russian and French scores, it can not be said that Mozart and Koussevitzky make a particularly happy team. One would not hire a Turgenev to adapt a Moliere play, so why a Koussevitzky to project Mozart? The Russian conductor, with typical Slavic imperturbability, calmly accepts the miraculous airiness of Mozart's light-hearted score and phlegmat-

ically reduces its buoyant spirits to a methodical exercise in portentous music-making, Boston style. His inability to illumine the delicate tracings of tone and phrase that Mozart outlined for the delectation of the sensitive performer can not but undermine the unwarpable perfection of the composer's conception; though, in the end, as always, Mozart triumphs over all obstacles.

The recording, made last summer at Tanglewood, is clear enough to emphasize the soggy, heavy-footed orchestral playing. The Beecham set (Columbia album MM-387), though somewhat aged, is still the best.

—A.W.P.

**MOZART:** Symphony No. 41 "Jupiter" in C (K.551); Symphony No. 39 in E flat (K.543); **Bavarian State Radio Orchestra** conducted by **Hans Rosbaud**. Mercury LP disc MG 10038, \$4.85.

▲ Another month, another "Jupiter," though this time we get a whole other symphony thrown in for "just a few pennies more," as they say in the coffee ads. The Krips-London Symphony version reviewed last month is remarkably similar to this one so far as tempi and general contours are concerned; perhaps it is the standard Kapellmeister reading taught in all German conservatories. Taking his cue from the subtitle, Rosbaud—undoubtedly a scholar of the ancient classics as well as the musical classics—sounds each phrase with imposing emphasis, underlining the Jovian aspects of the score, as though he were bound to stuff every note down gullets without permitting a single crotchet to slop over.

I can not agree with his treatment of the beginning of the E flat Symphony. Here I would insist on a more weighty announcement of the recitative-like opening, which Rosbaud races through without a sidelong glance. The slow movement, one Mozart's best, is as completely shapeless as a partly filled sausage and just as exciting. But why go on? Let us wax really indignant about all this and ask, what was the point of releasing this disc in the place? Both these symphonies are well represented in gramophone catalogs. Rosbaud, fundamentally a well-intentioned time-beater, has little or nothing to offer that hasn't been more skillfully accomplished previously.

The Bavarian State Radio Orchestra performs without distinction, making a bright, rather harsh sound that is foreign



to the requirements of these scores. Some of this edginess may well have been emphasized in the transferral to LP.

—A. W. P.

**STRAUSS:** Macbeth — Symphonic Poem, Op. 23; and **MARTINU:** Concerto Grosso; **Vienna Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Henry Swoboda**. Westminster LP disc WL 50-4, price \$5.85.

**STRAUSS'S** "Macbeth" is in reality his first tone-poem, though it bears a later opus number than "Don Juan." It was written in the summer of 1887, and presented by von Bulow in Berlin. The conductor made suggestions to the composer which the latter adopted, and the work was revised and published after "Don Juan."

I have never understood why "Macbeth" is neglected. It is a conductor's score — one that sounds and packs many a wallop. Its finale is one of Strauss's strongest and most impressive. Long years ago, Ernest Newman pointed out that it is a superior work to "Don Juan" from the viewpoint of form. The latter work is not as well balanced. "Macbeth" avoids its faults "by living throughout, as it were, in the same medium." This tone poem is purely psychological in its exploitation of the soul of the character. The opening theme, depicting Macbeth, recalls the hero's theme to come much later—a fine, noble motive. Inasmuch as the work is "all psychology and no action," with the possible exception of the brilliant, triumphant march near the end symbolizing the triumph of Macduff over Macbeth, it may seem diffuse on first acquaintance; but a few hearings should clarify its form. The rich scoring and the masterly technique have long since held our interest.

Martinu's "Concerto Grosso" is a zestful reshaping of an old form in a modern expression. Its melodic content is eminently Czech, in the Smetana tradition, while its instrumentation has a more international flavor. The opening movement, with its valiant energy, is superbly contrasted by a forceful, expressive Andante. The finale—a sort of perpetuum mobile, is as irresistibly spontaneous and witty as it is ingenious.

Dr. Swoboda, a Czech himself, plays the Martinu score with appropriate vehemence. His performance of the Strauss work is solid and dramatically telling without being pompous. The overall sound of both performances is good. The Vienna

Symphony does not rate in the class of the Vienna Philharmonic, but it proves on this record at least to be a reliable and efficient organization. The Martinu fares best in reproduction, the Strauss has some pitch wavering in woodwinds and strings.

— P. H. R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** Romeo and Juliet — Overture Fantasia; and **WAGNER:** Die Götterdämmerung — Siegfrieds Rheinfahrt and Siegfrieds Tod; **Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York**, conducted by **Leopold Stokowski**. Columbia LP disc ML 4273, \$4.95.

▲ For richness and mellowness of orchestral sound, I do not believe the recording of these selections can be matched. Columbia's 30th Street studio where this performance was recorded, has been



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yielding of late some of the finest orchestral recordings extant. Stokowski's older Philadelphia Orchestra set of the "Romeo and Juliet" is certainly surpassed by this version. The conductor's latest reading of this overly familiar work is as wayward as it is individual. However, it is glowingly played with that sensuous beauty of sound for which Stokowski is famous. The omission of the short coda at the end recalling the conflict of the drama seems fitting to the music though one misses the drum roll. Stokowski has always omitted these last bars.

Stokowski's synthesis of Wagner's music leaves me with mixed feelings. His performance has too much emotional excess for my taste; it is lacking in the lofty mood of the recording by Toscanini, who used the version Wagner prepared. The Wagner-Stokowski orchestration seems thicker, glowing with submerged fires, which as sheer sound may please the ear, but there is not the proper contrast between the joyfulness of Siegfried's Rhine Journey and the tragedy of his Funeral March. Inseparably linked together as this music is on this disc makes one feel as though one had visualized only the fore-end and the hind-end of a noble ship. With the old record changer mechanism, the change of mood was less radical.

—P. H. R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 (Pathétique); **L'Orchestre de la Société du Conservatoire de Paris** conducted by **Charles Muench**; and **Romeo and Juliet—Fantasy Overture**; **The London Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Eduard Van Beinum**. London Gramophone LLP-166/67, \$11.90.

**A** BRILLIANT RECORDING serves the "Pathétique" very well indeed, but in this case it also points up some rough playing.

The scherzo, taken at a fast pace, is a bit sharp-edged and rhythmically four-square. So far, on records, Furtwaengler has handled this movement most satisfactorily. Yet, if Victor on its LP version (which to date I have not heard) can bring about Toscanini's superb crescendo effect, the latter's performance of the scherzo will offer strong competition.

There are those who contend that Toscanini plays this symphony in the classical manner. This is not quite true. Toscanini alone observes the composer's mark-

ings in the score, especially in the opening movement. With him the accents of inner voices assume an equal dramatic significance to the climactic effects. Muench takes some romantic liberties; and he often uses rubati, as do most conductors. Yet, his changes in mood are not in bad taste, but instead are often realized to exploit coloration which Toscanini shuns. There is a similar nervous sensibility in both conductor's performances, but the feeling is completely different. I admire Muench's first movement, especially the opening and the phrasing of the famous melody; but his erratically paced development is a distinct let-down after the superb control of Toscanini's performance. The finale is played with deep feeling, in a feverish romantic way. On the whole, Muench gives us a stimulating reading, well balanced and well clarified in detail.

After the lush, erotic Stokowski version of "Romeo and Juliet" (on Columbia), the Van Beinum performance is sobriety itself. Here, we have a musicianly reading—well balanced and controlled—which, in my estimation, would have been even better had the orchestra been the conductor's superior Amsterdam Concertgebouw. This is a fine recording, clear and brilliant, but lacking in the rich sonorities of the Columbia disc.

—P.H.R.



**MENDELSSOHN:** Concerto in E minor, Op. 64; **Jascha Heifetz** (violin) with the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. RCA Victor set WDM-1356, three 45 rpm discs, \$3.35.

▲ Heifetz recalls Ysaye in the phenomenal stride which he adopts in the first and last movements. After the poised pace of the Campoli-Van Beinum performance of these movements, in which one thought as much of the music as the players, this virtuosic display leaves me cold. It is only in the slow movement that Heifetz makes music in a wholly persuasive and communicative manner. Here, he is truly in rapport with the conductor. Remembering the perfect teamwork of Szigeti and Beecham in this concerto many years ago, I cannot quite consign myself to the belief that Sir Thomas is always at the

helm of the orchestra. For there are times when one feels that the soloist and the conductor are not pulling together.

As a recording, this is a highly satisfactory job, but so too was the London Gramophone one. The latter, moreover, was a first-rate LP disc, which probably this one will become in due course.

—P.H.R.

**MILHAUD:** Second Violin Concerto; and Concertino de Printemps; **Louis Kaufman** (violin) with members of the **French National Radio Diffusion Orchestra** conducted by **Darius Milhaud**. Danses de Jacaremirim; **Louis Kaufman** and **Artur Balsam** (piano). Capitol LP disc P-8071, \$4.85.

ONE of the outstanding releases of the spring is this new Capitol disc of three Milhaud works admirably performed by the executants listed above.

Two of the compositions are recent products by the modern French master and are making their first appearance on records. The other—an exceptionally lovely piece, "Concertino de Printemps"—was once available on a Polydor disc in a performance by Yvonne Astruc and an orchestra conducted by the composer. The Kaufman rendition, aided by the benefits of modern recording, easily replaces the older version.

A new recording of the Concertino is most welcome. An authentic outdoor piece, it evokes many of springtime's pleasures. Its warm, flowing, melodies sing and soar. Harmonically, the work is clean and clear; instrumentally, it is as bright as a cloudless day in Arizona.

The Second Violin Concerto, written in 1946, is a significant work and a worthy addition to the concerto repertory. A three movement composition, it is memorable for its vast variety of expressive coloration, its first class melodic material, and its elegant orchestration. It is a neo-Romanticism in the fullest sense of that term, for its chief aim is personal expression, not monumental utterance.

The "Danses de Jacaremirim" are delectable miniatures that recall Milhaud's other Brazilian flavored pieces. Their ever delightful rhythmic fancy and their display of the capacities of the violin should make them servicable concert numbers.

It is seldom that one finds an LP with three compositions of such freshness and quality. It is a pleasure to recommend this disc that so thoroughly meets those high standards.

—C. J. L.

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**BARTOK:** 44 Duets for Two Violins; Victor Artay and Michael Kuttner. Period LP set SPLP 506, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲ "Sharp and telling sketches from an artist's notebook — real masterpieces in miniature," says David Hall in his notes. It is a true description of these short pieces. They run the gamut of technique, rhythmic complexity and harmonic structure—from the simple to the difficult.

Each piece bears a descriptive title, just as the 153 piano pieces of the composer's "Mikrokosmos." Some of the duets are known in piano arrangements, others will be unknown. These are not merely studies in performing technique, as some would have us believe, but intriguing music derived from Bartok's long association with the study of folk music. Listeners will choose their favorites, but I believe the way to hear this music is to take a record side at a time and let the composer show us his gift and ingenuity in developing his polyphony.

The two violinists, both of Hungarian extraction, have played these works together for a number of years both in Europe and this country. They are capable and admirable musicians. The recording is first rate. —P.H.R.

**BARTOK:** Violin Sonata No. 2 and Four Roumanian Dances; Tossy Spivakovsky (violin) and Artur Balsam (piano). Concert Hall Society LP CHC-39, \$4.85.

**TOSSY SPIVAKOVSKY** plays these works better than anyone else I have ever heard. Indeed, he seems to have all the technical, intellectual, and temperamental equipment necessary for giving performances of the greatest strength to all of Bartok's compositions for violin.

In the past five years I have been an avid listener to Spivakovsky's Bartok. Not once, during that period, have I heard him give anything but the most memorable renderings.

If Spivakovsky does not make this Sonata expressively clear to me, he has accomplished no less in this aspect of his

performance than any other fiddler I have heard try the work. Composed in two continuous movements, the Second Violin Sonata is, for this writer, one of Bartok's less absorbing products. What were startling innovations in the Sonata (it was composed in 1920) are now rather widely used methods. And of what Bartok has to say in it, I know little more now than when I first heard the work. Such circumstances do militate against any listener's finding in any rendering of this composition a genuine feeling of satisfaction.

The same cannot be said of the Four Roumanian Dances. These pieces and the way they are performed are knockouts.

—C. J. L.

**BEETHOVEN:** Quintet for Piano and Winds in E flat, Opus 16; Orazio Fragoni (piano), Etienne Baudou (oboe), Henri Druart (clarinet), Gilbert Cousier (horn), and Maurice Allard (bassoon); and **BEETHOVEN:** 32 Variations in C minor; Orazio Fragoni (piano). Vox LP disc PLP-6040, \$5.95.

IT HAS LONG BEEN the fashion for the music appreciation crowd to run down the early wind pieces of Beethoven — this "Quintet," the "Septet," the "Horn Sonata," etc. — as being juvenile and depending too much upon the example of Mozart. While one might successfully defend the premise that the "Septet" is too long for its own good, there is little fault to be found with this "Quintet." Granted it is modeled after Mozart's "Quintet," even to the selection of the same key signature. I think it reasonable to assume that this choice of tonality by both composers was influenced by the desire to simplify execution of their pieces, not by any esthetic factor, as E flat is a particularly good key for the B flat clarinet and was one of the two best for the primitive valveless horns of the classical period.

In keeping with the established custom (especially in Germany) of paralleling wind scores for the string trade, Beethoven prepared a piano and string version of this piece which, to our undying shame, is more generally heard than the original. Beethoven had a decided knack of writing for the winds. If his score does not have the polished elegance of Mozart's, at least it has the distinction of being more graciously melodic. "Amiable," the word used by the program annotator, describes its quality very aptly.

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There has been a tremendous rash of wind ensemble recordings emanating from France in the last year or so. With the added impetus of low production costs made possible by LP technique, it is safe to say that we shall soon have recordings of a number of scores previously considered too limited in appeal for a successful commercial venture. Oubradous, the tireless French bassoonist-conductor, has made quite a few sets with his group, including this very piece. Unfortunately, for purposes of comparison, it has not as yet reached these shores. Two other versions have been out of print for more than ten years.

It is too bad that these French groups have in many cases made the only available recordings of classic and romantic German scores, for the resulting tonal blend is a far cry from the quality the Teutonic composers had in mind, not because of any deficiency on the part of the French instrumentalists, but because of a difference in the construction of their instruments, together with a national style of playing that draws a border line more sharply marked than any customs barrier. For example, the French version of the horn, whether they use their traditional piston-type "cor d'harmonie" (a first cousin of our mellophone) or a more international rotary-type valve instrument, is still a smaller bore instrument than the horns used in Germany, Holland, Italy and the United States, most of which are of German make or design. The tone quality of the French player is much more open and light than we are accustomed to, and since a healthy vibrato is the garlic in the Gallic hornist's tonal recipe, the resultant character is very close to that of a tenor saxophone.

The ensemble on this disc have rehearsed carefully and play with a pleasant, digestible sound. Their interpretation is on the bland side, no doubt because of the lack of inspiration from the pianist Frugoni, whose schoolboy approach is not calculated to demonstrate the more mature aspects of the music. He is less self-conscious in the "32 Variations" but fails to make his point with any imposing degree of conviction.

The recording is very good, the timbres of the instruments retaining their individuality with startling clarity. The piano has been well favored.

— A. W. P.

**HAYDN:** Quartet in C major, Op. 76, No. 5 (Emperor), and Quartet in D minor, Op. 76, No. 2 (Quintet); **Galimar String Quartet**. Period LP disc SPLP 504, \$5.95.

▲ The Galimars have the technical proficiency to do justice to these quartets. Emotionally Haydn dug deeper in both these works than most players realize. I think the theme, for example, at the opening of the D minor, which is worked up to the greatest effectiveness, should become more dramatically meaningful than we hear it in this performance. In the C major, in which we have variations on the Austrian National Hymn, I remember the advice of some famous players. Haydn's variations "on this immortal melody are enshrined amid movements which demand the most mature attainments."

"Mature attainments" demand something more than technical proficiency. The old Pro Arte and Lener versions of the "Emperor" are still remembered for their warmer texture. Yet, these new performances are representative of the trend today among modern players, and being LP versions perhaps will take precedence. The recording is clear and brilliant, though a close microphone job. —P. H. R.

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**SCHUMANN:** Quartet in A Major, Opus 41, No. 3; **Winterthur String Quartet.** Concert Hall Society LP disc CHC38, \$5.95.

▲ On the whole Schumann's sloppy methods of organization and the thinness of his creative urge mitigated against the successful fulfillment of his desire to write for the confining medium of the string quartet. This particular work, however, suffers less than the others from his shortcomings, though the enthusiastic Schumann rushed it to completion in a mere four days.

Graceful melodies follow one another with breathless ease. Unabashed romanticism blooms in a world of rose-tinted spectacles where all is sweetness and light. The naive goodness of Schumann's sunny soul is so patently honest here that one is embarrassed to intrude a shadow of cavil or stricture.

The ensemble, drawn from the Winterthur Municipal Orchestra (of Switzerland), is first-rate. Intonation, phrasing and balance are without blemish, and the warm tonal blend is cleanly reproduced.

—A. W. P.



**BIZET:** Jeux d'Enfants, Op. 22; **Vitya Vronsky and Victor Babin** (pianists). Columbia LP disc ML 2107, \$3.85.

▲ We are always hearing complaints about the paucity of the duo-pianists' repertoire, yet here is a charming suite that so far as I can determine, has never before been recorded. Some of the music, of course, is familiar in its orchestral dress as the "Petite Suite d'Orchestre" (1872), which was made into a ballet by Massine in 1932 and was in the repertoire of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo for a number of years before the last war. The ballet music was recorded by Antal Dorati

and the London Philharmonic (Victor set M-510) in the late thirties.

The French have always had a notable ability to create outstanding music for and about children, possibly because children — so often dearly come by — are are treated with such importance in that land. Saint-Saens' "Carnival of the Animals," Debussy's "Children's Corner," Ravel's "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges" and "Ma Mere L'Oye," Inghelbrecht's "Dernieres Nurseries" and Poulenc's "Babar" music are felicitous examples. This score of Bizet, while not necessarily written for children, deals most effectively with childish subjects in an endearingly whimsical manner without condescension or smugness. It is delightful listening for all ages.

Vronsky and Babin play these little pieces simply and lovingly, without ostentation or fussiness. Their piano tone has been realistically captured by the engineers, so that it can be reported without reservation that this disc merits your attention.

—A. W. P.

**A CONCERT FOR ORGAN:** Toccata and Fugue in D minor (Bach); Chorale from Finlandia (Sibelius); Marche Champêtre (Boex); The Fifers (Dandrieu) avec Maria (Schubert); Fugue in E minor ("Cathedral") (Bach); **Richard Keys Biggs** (organ) (Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Los Angeles). Capitol 10" LP L-8089, \$3.85.

▲ "The other Mr. Biggs" has brought together a rather incongruous assortment for his short program. One side of the LP is given over to a not very exciting performance of the famous D minor Toccata and Fugue. Although we are told in the container notes that the organ he plays has been fitted with "antique pipes" to approximate the Baroque instrument, anyone who will compare the sound of this recording with that of E. Power Biggs, playing the Germanic Museum organ (Victor 18058) or of Weinrich on the "Praetorius" at Princeton (Musicraft set 36) must conclude that this one is a considerable compromise. The reproduction, too, is uneven in volume.

There seems little justification for combining such music with the Sibelius and Schubert arrangements, which are played, not inappropriately perhaps, for all they are worth. The Boex and Dandrieu pieces are satisfactory; the Bach Fugue a bit ponderous.

—P. L. M.

## INDEX TO VOL. 15

### The American RECORD GUIDE

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**FOLK SONGS OF HUNGARY**, Arrangements of Béla Bartók and Zoltan Kodály; **Leslie Chabay** (tenor) and **Tibor Kozma** (piano). Bartok Recording Studio LP disc BRS 004, \$5.95.

▲One can trust Peter Bartók, the composer's son, to see to it that his father's music is performed in an expressive and stylistic manner. Also, that the recording, which Peter handles himself, does justice to the occasion.

What a wealth of material Bartók and Kodály tapped in rediscovering the songs of their homeland. In this set there are two songs, dating from 1906, arranged by Bartók and Kodály, twelve songs by Bartók himself, and two by Kodály. One suspects that Bartók made little changes in the vocal lines, which are artless and simple, but his vivid personality and imagination are reflected in the bold style of his piano accompaniments. In so doing, I do not feel that Bartók has destroyed the folk idiom but rather enhanced it. His setting of the piano part of the song "In the Jailhouse," for example, is dramatically enhanced by the changes in the accompaniment with each verse. I am told there are many Jailhouse songs in Hungary, but I doubt that any other is more effective than the present one. The poem brings back memories of Verlaine's *D'un e Prison* in its hopeless anguish.

There is a wide range of emotion in the Bartók songs, while those of Kodály are amusing soldier ditties.

I recommend to all listeners interested in folk songs that they become acquainted with this record. It is most fascinating.

—P. H. R.

**KODALY: Psalmus Hungaricus**; Dallas Symphony Orchestra conducted by Antal Dorati with Gabor Carelli (tenor) and the North Texas State College Chorus and the Dallas Children's Choir. RCA Victor set WDM-1331, three 45 rpm discs, \$3.35. *Te Deum*; Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Wiener Chor conducted by Henry Swoboda with Sena Jurinac (soprano), Sieglinde Wagner (alto), Rudolf Christ (tenor), and Alfred Poell (bass). Theatre Overture; Vienna Symphony Orchestra con-

ducted by Henry Swoboda. Westminster LP disc WL50-1, \$5.95.

THESE new releases constitute a veritable Kodály Festival. This is the first time, if I am not mistaken, that so many of the Hungarian composer's works have been issued in one month. This situation is a pleasure, for all of Kodály's

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work is notable for its warm feeling, its solid craftsmanship, and its fanciful elaboration of musical texture.

If these works do not appear to be the equal of Kodaly's fine "Hary Janos" and his fascinating Galanta and Moroszek Dances, they are nevertheless absent of any banality, lack of sincerity, or overweening expression, and certainly worth getting acquainted with.

The strongest of the three works appears to me to be the "Psalmus Hungaricus." Composed in 1923 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the union of the twin cities of Buda and Pest, it employs a text by Michael Veg (a 16th century Hungarian poet) made from the 55th Psalm. The poem filled with national associations, expresses grief over the sorrow of Hungary; and ends with a testimonial of faith in the Lord, "Who will not suffer the righteous to be mov'd."

The performance by the Dallas Orchestra under Dorati appears to be a good one. The work of the choirs, while notable for cleanliness and spirit, is lacking in vibrancy. I suspect that this condition is caused by a shortage of good voices in the choir. The tenor soloist, Gabor Carelli, sings with expression and not a little effort. What hurts the performance more than anything else, though, is the very poor recording. The frequency range seems astonishingly limited, and the balance between tenor, chorus, and orchestra is deplorable.

The "Te Deum," represented on a Westminster disc, is a largescale religious work made novel by Kodaly's use of Hungarian rhythms and folk-style melodies. The expressive content of the work is communicated by Swoboda, his orchestra and the chorus; but the general execution seems to be on the rough side. The soloists are agreeable but not distinguished by any especial vocal beauty or style.

The "Theatre Overture," composed by Kodaly for the Budapest performance of his opera, "Hary Janos," is (like the stage work) inspired by Hungarian folk material. It is a lively piece, jolly, clean, and solidly sonorous. An excessive use of certain leading themes appears to be its only distracting element. Messy orchestral playing spoils what might otherwise have been an effective performance. The recording of this work and the "Te Deum" is no more than adequate. — C. J. L.

**MOZART:** Die Entführung aus dem Serail—Hier soll ich Dich denn sehen! Konstanze, Konstanze! and In Mohrenland gefangen war; Don Giovanni—Nur ihrem Frieden, and Folget der Heissgeliebten; Die Zauberflöte—Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön; **Peter Anders** (tenor) with the **German Opera House Orchestra** conducted by **Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt**. Capitol-Telefunken 10" disc L8084, \$3.95.

**PETER ANDERS** gained quite a reputation in Germany as a Mozart singer. Two of the six arias were issued earlier on a single disc—the "Konstanze Konstanze!" from "Die Entführung" and the portrait aria from "Die Zauberflöte" (see March for reviews).

Judging from Anders's singing of the first three arias, I would like to have heard him as Belmonte in the theatre. We have not been too successful in performances of "The Seraglio" in this country, but I cannot imagine a German performance with Anders and other comparable artists disappointing.

Though the music of "Don Giovanni," sung in German, does not sound quite right for one used to the Italian language, I must admit that Anders sings the two tenor arias smoothly and expressively. A couple of unpleasant sounding words on high tones in "Dalla sua pace" made me realize how smoothly the Italian fits the music. Anders has the flexibility to handle "Il mio tesoro" with ease, but his middle section sung on one breath seems a bit hurried. There is a bad cut in this aria near the end, probably due to the fact it was planned for a 10-inch disc.

I recommend this record to all Mozart opera enthusiasts; the "Il Seraglio" arias are especially appealingly sung. And Schmidt-Isserstedt's accompaniments are fine musicianly ones. —J. N.

**MOZART:** Great Mass in C minor, K. 427; **Rosl Schweiger** (soprano I), **Herta Toepper** (soprano II), **Hugo Meyer Welfing** (tenor), **George London** (bass), **Anton Heiller** (organ), **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** and **Akademie Chorus of Vienna** conducted by **Meinhard von Zallinger**. The Haydn Society, set HSLP-2006, 2 discs, \$11.90.

**I**N reviewing the "Et incarnatus etc." from the "Credo" of this Mass, as sung by Erna Berger (see February 1949 issue), Mr. Miller said: "It is diffi-

em. Scarcely to believe that this suave and placidly  
schemed lovely melody is taken from the same  
Mass that contains the almost Bachian  
"Qui tollis" etc. There is nothing very  
detachedly churchly in the soprano aria, describing  
the incarnation, but there is a heavenly  
sweetness hard to resist." In recent years,  
this air has become the best known ex-  
cerpt from a great work which unfortun-  
ately the composer did not complete.

When we fit it into its place in the Mass,  
we find it arrives after one of the most  
solemn moments and removes us spiritual-  
ly and bodily from the church to the op-  
era house. Yet, the flawless beauty and ap-  
peal of this piece cannot be refuted, but  
since Mozart never completed this section  
of the Mass we are left wondering what  
he would have done with the "Crucifixus."

That Mozart was in a churchly mood  
when he wrote his "Kyrie eleison" is self-  
evident, and the soprano's beautiful  
"Christe eleison," though bordering on the  
operatic, does not actually break the mood.  
The polyphonic treatment of the entire  
opening section of the Mass is warmly  
sentient. Though the "Gloria" varies in its  
moods, we cannot deny its splendors. The  
opening chorus has a fine transparency.  
"It makes us think of a Handel who has  
lost weight and become nimble of foot,"  
says Eric Blom. The pattern changes with  
the "Et in terra pax" and then returns  
again to the "entering 'gloria' phrase, as  
though the singers, concerned for a mo-  
ment with earthly cares, could not turn  
back to the praise of God soon enough."  
The duet for the women soloists, "Do-  
mine Deus," as Blom rightfully points out,  
has "an ecclesiastical manner of about a  
century earlier" and surely the "Qui tollis"  
has true Bachian grandeur.

The Mass is given in this recording in  
the unfinished version by Mozart. Hence,  
after the "Et incarnatus est," we skip to  
the "Sanctus." The latter, for double  
chorus, is imposing, full of animation,  
while the "Benedictus," for solo quartet,  
has "an archaic flavor," in which there is  
true beauty of expression but little under-  
lying emotion.

This work, listed simply in the Koechel  
catalogue as "C minor Mass, K. 427," has  
been deservedly called "great" and the  
Haydn Society are not remiss in adding  
the adjective to the title on the labels.

The performance is one of the best  
things that the Haydn Society has given  
us. The quality of sound is lucid, clean  
and well balanced. The chorus and the

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solo artists are first-rate. Rosl Schweiger, who sings the "Et incarnatus est," has a clear, bright soprano voice, a little white on her upper tones but flexible and accurate in pitch. There is some fine flute playing in this section. A word should be said about the expressive quartet singing in the "Benedictus." The conductor, von Zellinger, never lets the tempi lag, but keeps the orchestral playing consistently alert and very much alive.

In setting controls, one can leave the upper end wide-open, but the bass should be set at 300 cps, which means one will need less bass for good balance than in domestic recordings. —P. H. R.

**POULENC:** *Le Bal Masque* — Profane Cantata for Baritone and Chamber Orchestra; **Warren Galjour** (baritone) and chamber orchestra conducted by **Edvard Fendler**. Esoteric 10" LP No 2000, \$3.85.

**ESOTERIC RECORDS** have put us in their debt once again with their release of Francis Poulenc's captivating "Le Bal Masque." The execution by the various instrumentalists and Warren Galjour under the direction of Edvard Fendler is first class. With the exception of slight wavers in sound here and there, the disc is well recorded; and the surfaces are quiet.

"Le Bal Masque" is set to poems by Max Jacobs that are amusing in their combination of nonsense and unrelated subject matter and in the poet's way of using both simple and labored means of expression. Poulenc's music, which fits these poems like a glove, is noteworthy for vocal writing of the utmost elegance and an instrumentation that is as clear as spring water.

What really makes this work memorable is the clarity of its expression. It is one of the best examples of Poulenc's ability to make use of any melodic material (serious or popular, original or unoriginal) or any harmonic or instrumental device to convey objectively any idea or emotion that is in a poem he wishes to set to music.

It is a pleasure to welcome and recommend this first recording of a fascinating and delightful masterwork. —C. J. L.

**SAUGUET — POULENC — AURIC — PREGER—MILHAUD:** *Mouvements du Cœur*; **SAUGUET:** *Visions Infernales*; **Doda Conrad** (bass) and **David**

**Garvey** (piano). REB Editions LP and REB-2, price \$5.95.

**THE FIRST** is a suite for bass voice and piano, based on a text expressing the various moods of Chopin's life by the poetess Louise de Vilmorin. It was commissioned by the Polish bass Doda Conrad, who felt that such an enterprise would be a fitting tribute to his countryman Chopin on the year of the latter's centenary. It would also be useful for program and publicity purposes, as the bass repertoire is somewhat limited, and the idea sufficiently novel to be worth a few lines in the papers.

Each section of the suite is based on a dance-form favored by Chopin and has been contributed by one of the several listed above. The subtitles are *Prelude* (Sauguet), *Mazurka* (Poulenc), *Valse* (Auric), *Scherzo Improvisé* (Francaix), *Etude* (Preger), *Ballade Nocturne* (Milhaud) and *Postlude: Polonaise* (Sauguet). Usually, when a number of musicians are persuaded to contribute segments of music to an integrated whole, there is a lack of cohesion to the finished product that gives away the varied source of the material. In this case, the plan of the work was carefully laid out in advance by Conrad, with the assistance of Sauguet, who also provided the instrumental *Prelude* and *Postlude* to bind the suite together with a proper Chopinesque flavor.

Poulenc's *Mazurka* is outstanding, but the work as a unit holds together well enough. I heard it in the distracting arena of the concert hall and found that in spite of the vocalist's uneven delivery it held the attention with creditable consistency.

"*Visions Infernales*" is a setting of six poems by Max Jacob, the texts following the traditional late 19th-century French pattern of dramatic preoccupation with the symbolic broodings of tortured mankind. Sauguet's music is effectively mated to the words, a further example of the present-day French leadership in the field of serious song writing.

Conrad may be remembered as a member of Nadia Boulanger's ensemble in her memorable Monteverdi album (Victor set 496, withdrawn). When war came, he was in this country. He served actively in the U. S. Army, reaching the rank of Infantry Captain. I have heard him twice in concert since the war and have noted with dismay that since he has escaped Mme. Boulanger's eagle eye and sharp ear, he has indulged in some bad vocal habits that

do not permit him to do full justice to his material. By nature he has a large, hollow, rather hoarse-sounding voice that is not too flexible:

The interpretation of these song cycles is convincing enough, the sounds produced not unpleasant, but I can not help wondering how a singer such as Singher—who doesn't have too much vocal equipment nowadays, either—might have turned a particular phrase. In other words, I think there is more to these scores than Conrad mines from them, effective as he may be.

My copy has serious distortion of the piano tone, though the voice is clear enough. Whether this be a recording or a processing fault, it is noticeable enough to interfere with enjoyment of the music.

—A. W. P.

**SCHUETZ:** Weihnachts-Historie; **The Cantata Singers, William Hess** (tenor), **Charlotte Bloecher** (soprano) and **Paul Matthen** (basso) with orchestra conducted by **Arthur Mendel**. REB editions 3, LP disc, \$5.95.

**THE "Christmas Story"** is a work of tremendous interest to those who know their Bach. Its composer, Heinrich Schuetz (1585-1672), a great master born just a hundred years before Bach, pointed the way by using such devices as the narration of an Evangelist to hold a Protestant oratorio or Passion together.

In the notes printed on the record container, Arthur Mendel tells the story of how he pieced the work together from the original, incomplete publication and manuscripts discovered in our own century. As editor (his version has been published by Schirmer) he spared no effort to restore the score as Schuetz intended it. As director of this recorded performance, he has, with complete understanding of the work's problems, been able to infuse the proper spirit into those who have worked with him.

It is not possible for me to listen dispassionately to the recording, since I myself took part in it. Even if this were not so, knowing the music as well as I do now, I doubt if I could hear it without being emotionally moved. In this work of a man in his late seventies are found the simple and solid faith that made possible the German Reformation and a musical technique equal to the greatest expressive demands. Such imaginative touches as the use of two violettas to accompany the voice of the Angel, trombones as the background for the chorus of High Priests

and Scribes, and two recorders for the trio of shepherds—these are things to bring tears to the eyes. Moreover, the simple intensity of the "Ehre sei Gott" and of the High Priests' chorus—"Zu Bethlehem im juedischen Lande"—is unmatched by any other music I know.

The performance, recently recorded in the auditorium of the Engineering Society in New York, had the benefit of two public presentations in 1948 and two more in 1949 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Among its other notable benefits is the work of its three excellent soloists: the pure voiced Charlotte Bloecher as the Angel, the virile Paul Matthen as Herod, and, above all, William Hess, who has few rivals in the role of Evangelist in the works of Bach and his predecessors. A further word must be added in praise of the recording, the work of Robert E. Blake, whose initials give a name to the label, for he has caught not only the sound but the atmosphere of the performance.

—P. L. M.

**VERDI:** Falstaff — E sogno?; Otello—Credo; Un Ballo in Maschera —Eri tu che macchiavi; **LEONCAVALLO:** I Pagliacci — Prologo; **GIORDANO:** Andrea Chenier — Nemico della patria; **ROSSINI:** Il Barbiere di Siviglia — Largo al factotum; **Frank Guarrera** (baritone) with the **Metropolitan Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Fausto Cleva**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2114, \$3.85.

**TWO** years ago in May after his graduation from the Curtis Institute of Music, Guarrera won the Metropolitan Auditions of the Air. Four days after receiving his contract with the Metropolitan Opera Association, the baritone left for Milan to take part in the summer season

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of the La Scala Opera at the special invitation of Arturo Toscanini. Recently, the conductor engaged Guarrera to sing the part of Ford in the broadcast performance of Verdi's "Falstaff." Readers who heard the young baritone were doubtless impressed with his singing and his dramatic characterization.

Of the several recently recorded operatic recitals of the present-day baritones, this one by Guarrera offers the most interpretative artistry. The baritone's voice is not as tonally rich as Merrill's but what he does with his voice is more rewarding. His sense of drama and characterization give his "Credo" and his "Eritu" real meaning. His singing of Ford's aria suggests a more mature artist. In the "Pagliacci" he is less impressive, and the voice is not always as steady as it should have been. The "Andrea Chenier" reveals Guarrera's insight into the character of Gerard, who was elevated by the French Revolution from a servant's position. In the familiar "Largo al factotum" he handles the bravura successfully, but there is not quite the spontaneity he will probably acquire in a few more years.

The recording is tonally rich and one of the finest things of its kind that Columbia has given us. It is unfortunate that the orchestral direction is not on a par with the singing. It is decidedly second-rate.

—J. N.

**Sermon On the Mount and Commentary on the Sermon On the Mount:** Pyramid EO-LQC-10735/6, 1-12" LP, \$5.95.

▲ The inspiring words of the "Sermon On the Mount" (Matthew: Chapters V, VI, and VII — King James version) are read with effect, but not affectation, by Stewart Robb, with organ background music by Elmo Russ. The simple, universal truth of this Sermon is particularly poignant in this day of unrest, uneasiness, and uncertainty. It should be listened to with an open heart and an open mind. Pyramid deserves a special word of praise for this well presented version.

The Commentary on the reverse side is a condensation from Harriet H. Dallas' "Life of Jesus, Our Friend From Bethlehem" read by Mary Dallas, with a background of chants by The Gregorian Three and organ accompaniment by Edward J. Rivette. The commentary is spoken clearly and with feeling but, effective as it is as an interpretation, it seems superfluous after the actual words of the Sermon. Its

simple, direct truth hardly needs "interpreting" for, surely, anyone who will listen can understand its message of universal love.

Pyramid has made an auspicious debut. The recording of the voice is excellent. Of the music, it is less satisfactory because it lacks perspective. But this is not serious for the words are all-important — and they are clear and in focus. —E. A.

## Light Instrumentals

**AGUIRRE:** Huella; **VALLE:** Ao Pe da Foguira; **J. S. BACH-WILHELMJ:** Air for the G String; **William Primrose** (viola) and **David Stimer** (piano). RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-0918, \$ .95.

▲ Two encore-type pieces of singular indistinction by Latin composers backed by a hotel dining-room classic are played by Primrose in his accustomed sumptuous, impeccable style. It is all very slick, suave and — to tell the truth — rather dull. The recording is excellent.

—A. W. P.

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Comedians' Galop (Kabalevsky); Meandering (Torch); Paddle Boat (Cochran); Fiddler's Folly (Stevens); Rippling Waters (Thorne); Honey Child (Cochran); Manhattan Playboy (Farnon); Soliloquy (Wood); **The Queen's Hall Light Orchestra**, conducted by **Robert Farnon** and **Anton Bennett**. London 10" LP disc LPE 146, \$3.95.

▲ The spirit of Robert Farnon lies behind much of this program, for several pieces are in his arrangements. One instinctively thinks of Kostelanetz when one eyes this program; but Farnon and Bennett are less fanciful and tricky than Kostelanetz and their work is more in the concert hall tradition. There's some good orchestral playing in this record, backed by first-rate FFRR engineering. Those who find music of this genre engaging are probably going to wear this disc out in the course of a few months. It's an ideal background program for dinner or idle conversation among visiting friends. I'll bet more than one guest will forget the trend of conversation and remark on the sentiment of the music.

—P. G.

**MUSIC OF RALPH BENATZKY:** featuring **Marcel Wittrisch** (tenor) and the **Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra** conducted

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Guide

by Victor Reinshagen. London LP disc  
LLP 158, \$5.95.

**MUSIC OF ROBERT STOLZ:** featuring  
Marcel Wittrisch and John Hendrik  
(tenors) with Robert Stolz and his Con-  
cert Orchestra. London 10" LP LPS  
157, \$3.85.

▲ Benatzky, a prolific composer of light  
operas and songs, is best known for "The  
White Horse Inn," which was given suc-  
cessfully throughout Europe and also in  
this country. The 12" disc above features  
vocal selections from "The Three Muske-  
teers" and "The White Horse Inn," and  
orchestral selections from the same scores  
as well as two other operettas. Reinshagen  
and Wittrisch are capable performers for  
this kind of music; they play up senti-  
ment in the true Viennese manner.

Stolz is also steeped in the Viennese  
tradition, which relives again in his oper-  
etta melodies. Sometimes the sentiment is  
laid on with a trowel, but many folks like  
this sort of thing; and Wittrisch probably  
sustains his popularity by realizing this.  
There are four vocal and four orchestral  
selections from Stolz's many operettas on  
this disc.

Recording in both cases does full jus-  
tice to the performers. —P. G.

## In The Popular Vein

**These Foolish Things and Roses of Pic-  
ardy:** Freddy Gardner, sax, with Peter  
Yorke and His Concert Orchestra; Col-  
umbia 38716.

● Unadulterated corn — as sax playing  
goes today — but nicely supported by the  
orchestra and well recorded.

**Two-Faced Heart and Oh! Oh! Oh!**  
Ophelia: Gordon MacRae with Paul  
Weston's Dixie Eight; Capitol 924.

● The only good Dixieland in this disc  
is the generous part of both sides left to  
the instrumentalists. MacRae's singing is  
nether good Dixieland nor MacRae. Life-  
like recording.

**The French Can-Can Polka and My Rosa:**  
Tony Pastor and His Orchestra, with  
vocal group Columbia 38714.

● The label calls it a "popular novelty —  
bright polka." That it is! It's a pot-pourri  
of snatches from Offenbach can-can  
music, done with verve and good tempo.  
Words, too. The reverse counts like count-

less other Italian dialect "comic" songs  
now defunct. This one should join the  
others. Remarkable recording with a spa-  
ciousness and perspective probably never  
before heard in a popular disc.

**A Paper Full of Fish and Chips and  
Whadda Ya Doin' Tonight, Dear:** Peter  
Donald, with Brass Band and Vocal  
Chorus; Columbia 38737.

● This is the Peter Donald of "Can You  
Top This?" radio fame. Both numbers are  
in the British music-hall style, with outra-  
geously exaggerated "Cockney" dialect.  
Maybe this is funny on the British stage.  
I'd rather hear Donald tell funny stories.

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**I Wish I Had A Sweetheart and I'm A Little Teapot:** Horace Heidt and His Musical Knights, featuring Ronnie Kemper (assisted by Donna and Her Don Juans in "I Wish . . ."); Columbia 38743.

● The first, in a warmly sentimental vein, is slightly reminiscent of "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi." Nicely played and sung. The overside is a nursery tune, sung neatly by Kemper, and accompanied with good taste. This side will please the children — and mabe a few grown-ups, too—especially if they have ever tried to pick off this tune on the piano with one finger.

**I Never Knew I Loved You and Let's Go West Again:** Columbia 1-564 (7" LP). **Spring Made A Fool of Me and As We Are Today:** Columbia 38724. Eddy Duchin and His Orchestra. Vocals by Tommy Mercer.

● Made-to-order in the familiar Duchin pattern. All are sentimental, with a good slice of Duchin piano playing and heavy on the vocals. Typical juke-box fare.

**Count Every Star and Our Love Story:** Herb Jeffries, with Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of Hugo Winterhalter; Columbia 1-555 (7" LF).

● The arrangements with chorus and orchestra are more interesting than the songs or the singing. The obvious imitation of the Vaughn Monroe manner is slightly sickening. There is come good trombone in "Our Love Story" — very Tommy Dorsey-ish. Who is it? Recording is top drawer.

**Eddy Duchin Plays the Music of George Gershwin:** Eddy Duchin, piano; Columbia CL-6103. **Teddy Wilson and His piano:** Teddy Wilson, piano; Columbia CL-6098.

● Two widely different styles of piano playing — the first: rambling, romantic, and gentle. These are polished presentations of some of Gershwin's best love songs, show-hits, and a tune from "Porgy and Bess." The second: rhythmic and stimulating, offers imaginative variations on tunes by Youmans, Kern, Green, Duke, and others.

The recordings are above reproach.

**Young Man With A Horn:** Doris Day and Harry James and His Orchestra; Columbia CL-6106.

● The film "Young Man With A Horn" was a dismal translation of Dorothy Baker's novel based on the life of Bix Beiderbecke. No masterpiece to begin with, the

book at least had the virtue of sincerity. The picture is a garbled, trumped-up story bearing but scant resemblance to the book. The only bright spots in the film were Harry James' contributions to the sound track to back Kirk Douglas' faking on the screen, and Doris Day's singing. Here, on one LP, is all the music from the film, as heard in the film with Doris Day and the orchestra, with Harry James' trumpet well in the lead. The spirit of true jazz is approached only in "The Man I Love" and "Limehouse Blues" which James and his rhythm section put over with verve. A good memento of the film, which will outlive its memory, this set is well recorded.

**Riders In the Sky and Chinese Mule Train:** Spike Jones and His City Slickers; Victor 47-3741 (or 20-3741).

● Typical Spike Jones zany-isms, but not as successful as some of his previous ones. "Riders" is definitely flat but "Chinese Mule Train" is better. Good enough fun, if you don't hear them too often. Recording is up to the best Victor 45 standards.

**The Chocolate Soldier** (Oscar Strauss): Ann Ayars, Charles Fredericks, John Percival, Jimmy Carroll, and the Guild Choristers, with Al Goodman and His Orchestra; Victor WK-21 (4-45s).

● A dubbing from standards — and it is evident. There is a certain lack of depth to the recording which gets very annoying. The singing is first rate: some of the singers have been doing very well for themselves at New York City Center this past season. Al Goodman's experienced hand is notable throughout.

**La Vie En Rose and Fascination:** The Malachrino Strings, conducted by George Melachrino; Victor 47-3739 (or 20-3739).

**La Vie En Rose and Mona Lisa:** Harry James and His Orchestra. Vocals by Dick Williams; Columbia 38768.

● Light concert music with a Continental flavor, in which the Melachrino treatment, with harp, is all to the good. The Harry James version is interesting for its trumpet and sax solos but it is not quite "in style." The vocal is definitely out of kilter. Incidentally, it's the Louiguy number which Edith Piaf popularized. "Fascination" is the well-known Marchetti light classic, here played with appreciation. "Mona Lisa" is from "Captain Carey, U. S. A." It's ordinary film-song calibre and not even James' expert treatment redeems it.

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**Ho Hum, It's Spring and Don't Say Good-bye:** Frau Warren, with Orchestra conducted by Henri René; Victor 47-3738 (or 20-3738). **Symphony of Spring and As We Are Today:** Hugo Winterhalter and His Orchestra, with Chorus; Victor 47-3737 (or 20-3737). **Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year and Joshua:** Ralph Flanagan and His Orchestra. Vocal by Harry Prime; Victor 47-3724 (or 20-3724).

● Spring is in the air — and in the record lists. Frau Warren's number is cute with catching lackadaisicalness. The "Symphony" is rich in treatment, a good, light concert number. The third spring number, a Frank Loesser from the film "Christmas Holiday," is not a masterpiece — but pleasant. The way Flanagan does it, it sounds twice as good as it really is—a gem for originality both in treatment and spirit. The arrangement of the Negro spiritual "Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho" is first class music-making. The other two flip-overs are not quite up to their mates in interest. Technically, the Flanagan is excellent; the other two, less so.

**Peter Cottontail and Funny Little Bunny:** Gene Autry, with Instrumental Accompaniment; Columbia 1-575 (7" LP). **Peter Cottontail and Stars Are the Windows of Heaven:** Fran Alison, with Orchestra conducted by Jack Fascinato; Victor 47-3727 (or 20-3727)

● Gene Autry has done it again. At Christmas time, he wowed the children (and a few thousand parents) with "Rudy, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and ran the sales into thousands of discs. For Easter he has come across with a number nearly as good, musically, but as far as the children are concerned a hit. Fran Alison's is not as successful. Both oversides are nearly as good, Fran's being frankly "heart-on-the-sleeve." Recordings are fine.

**I'd 've Baked A Cake and Mississippi Mud:** The Fontane Sisters, with Mitchell Ayres and His Orchestra; Victor 47-3713 (or 20-3713). **I'd 've Baked A Cake and It's So Nice To Have A Man Around the House:** Lucyann Polk, with Skip Martin and His Orchestra; Victor 54-0027 (or 30-0027). **I'd 've Baked A Cake and Does the Spearmint Lose Its Flavor On the Bedpost Over Night:** Benny Strong and His Orchestra. Vocals by Benny Strong; Capitol 916.

● For all-around good quality, the Lucyann Polk is tops with the right rhythm

and lilt in "I'd 've Baked A Cake" and just the right treatment in "It's So Nice." And the price is right, too. The Benny Strong has spank but it's not better and the reverse is lame comedy though it will probably become a Number One Hit be-

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cause of its looney title. The Fontane Sisters are good without being sensational. "Mississippi" leaves me cold — maybe because of the memory of some beautiful instrumental versions. Good recordings.

**Be Mine and Little Darlin', Little Angel:** Mindy Carson, and The Three Beaus. Orchestra conducted by Henri René; Victor 47-3725 (or 20-3725).

● This delightful singer becomes more enjoyable with each new hearing. Hers is a warm, tender style or an arch or impish one when the moods are indicated. Good examples of the two widely different styles. "Be Mine" is a gentle, declaration of love, beautifully sung. "Little Darlin'" is a hill-billyish version of the Quartet from "Rigoletto." René provides excellent support—achieving perfect changes in style.

**Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball? and Shoutin' Blues:** Victor 20-3514. **Walking Slow Behind You and Rocky Mountain Blues:** Victor 20-3572. **St. Louis Baby and Normania:** Victor 20-3601. Count Basie and His Orchestra.

● A good, though not sensational batch of Basies. The blues are best because they are closer to the Count's temperament. "Normania" is a frenzied bit which allows some virtuoso playing without really getting anywhere. The tribute to Jackie is understandably enthusiastic but hardly great music. One of the best is "Walking Slow" because if a swell James Rushing chorus, solidly backed. Only the 78's were heard here. The recordings are good and the surfaces smooth as silk.

**Ich bin dit fesche Lola and Kinder, heut' Abend such Ich mir was aus:** Marlene Dietrich, with Fr. Hollander and His Symphonic Jazz Orchestra; Victor 25-4107.

● The shallow recording and the style of the singing and playing date this record better than any label could. Both are pre-War Dietrichs. They are good souvenirs of her classic manner with cabaret songs of that day. Hollander was closely associated with her early success and both these songs are his own. One remembers with pleasure his now famous "Johnny" and Marlene's deliciously insinuating interpretation of it on a pre-War Telefunken disc.

**You're My Treasure and This is Heaven:** Alan Dale, with Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of Harry Zimmerman; Columbia 38720.

● The first is an appealing song, vaguely reminiscent of something heard years ago. Wasn't it once an Italian popular dance piece called "Tesoro mio?" Performed here at about half its original tempo, it's made to sound like a love ballad. The label gives no hint of its origin, and the composer's and lyricist's names are unfamiliar and quite un-Italian. The reverse is okay.

## BOOK REVIEWS

(Continued from page 294)

**SELECTIVE RECORD GUIDE** by Moses Smith, The Macmillan Company, 300 pages, \$4.50.

▲ Moses Smith's new book is for the person who wants to begin a collection of recorded music or for the person who thinks he ought to find out whether he likes music.

The volume is divided into three sections: (1) a basic list for those who have only \$100 to spend, (2) "a selective list" of recommended music arranged by composer, and (3) a longer group of pieces pigeonholed into musical categories.

Smith concerns himself with little but the music in his book. He makes few recommendations on the quality of performance or recording or the type of record (78, 45, or 33 rpm) to be purchased. He doesn't commit himself on too much of anything, it seems to me. He just appears to be friendly and to want to please everybody.

This amiable approach is further reflected in his smooth, facile writing style, and his listing of every kind of serious Occidental music under the sun — good and bad.

Throughout the book I am impressed by a certain lack of conviction. The author's "yes" or "no" about a work is not so important, I will freely admit, but the quality of reasoning and the strength of the author's belief in the conclusions he has come to are things of great value. Indeed, they are the only things that seem to me worth putting into print.

Smith's musical knowledge is sound enough and his experience as a music critic long enough for him to have a large fund of interesting musical opinions. I wish he had put more of them into this book.

—C. J. L.



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